LETTERS

ON THE

EVIDENCES, DOCTRINES, AND DUTIES,

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.—For we have not followed cunningly devised fables."

"Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh from the Father of Lights."

"These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

LETTERS

ON THE

EVIDENCES, DOCTRINES, AND DUTIES,

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND.

BY

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D., F.R.A.S.,

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY AT WOOLWICH, ETC.

SEVENTH EDITION.

WITH MANY ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS.

Complete in One Volume.

LONDON: BALDWIN AND CRADOCK,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

1839.

CHISWICK:
PRINTED BY C. WHITTINGHAM.

PREFACE.

The history of the work now presented to the public may be given in very few words. It originated in a series of conversations which I had about five years ago with a friend much younger than myself, who had a considerable acquaintance with almost all except religious subjects. *He* expressed much surprise that a person of my habits and pursuits in other respects should adopt the religious notions I had long entertained, or indeed be solicitous about any religious opinions whatever; and I endeavoured to assign the reasons which led me to embrace them, and to consider such topics as of the first importance. After a short time we were so far separated as to have much fewer opportunities of personal intercourse: and I in consequence became induced to carry on the momentous inquiry we had previously commenced, by letter. Pursuant to this intention, all the letters in the first volume[1] were actually written: they were read in manuscript by my friend; and, as I have reason to believe, were not unproductive of benefit. Having proceeded thus far, a growing particularity of inquiry was produced

[1] This work was originally published in two volumes, the first volume closing with the 11th letter.

on the one side, and a gradual extension of plan on the other: and thus, after many interruptions, and in the midst of numerous avocations of a very different kind, the work has become what it now is.

I had not, however, proceeded half way in the execution of my plan before it occurred to me, that what I first intended for private use might be neficial to others in circumstances analogous those of my friend; and I recollected that wha ever I might publish on the subject of religic would at least have the advantage of appearing disinterested, as it proceeded from the pen of a *layman*. It is, I am aware, extremely ridiculous for those who adopt the prescriptions of their physicians, and act upon the advice of their lawyers, *although* they are professional, to object to defences of Christianity from the pens of Clergymen *because* they are professional; yet, absurd and uncandid as the objection is, it is often advanced: it is therefore proper to meet it; and at times to show that there are those who cannot on such occasions be actuated by any love of worldly applause, or any thirst after emolument, but who feel sufficiently interested about Religion, and are sufficiently convinced of its powerful tendency to improve the conduct of individuals and to augment the general stock of happiness, to step for a little while out of their more appropriate province to plead its cause. Such defenders of revealed religion there have been in all ages; yet they have not been so numerous

as to render it improper or indecorous to increase their number: especially as the old prejudice still continues to operate with unabated energy; and there are many persons from whom the claims of Christianity receive a more respectful attention, when they are urged by one who is neither "a clergyman" nor "a methodist."

There have long existed several valuable essays on the *Evidences* of Christianity; and we now possess in the English language especially, the treatise of Dr. Paley, which all Christians consider as an honour to our age and nation. Had a luminous statement of the Historical Evidences been all that was aimed at or required, I should at once have referred my friend to Dr. Paley's as a standard, and, I believe, unanswerable work; and never have troubled either him or the public with any remarks of mine on the subject of religion. But it is very possible, and indeed very common, for men to be Christians in name and theory, and infidels in practice; to profess a belief in Christ, and in heart to deny him; to acknowledge him as Messiah, and to refuse to obey him as king; to avow the warmest admiration of the New Testament, and to despise and ridicule every thing in it which is characteristic and peculiar, and which constitutes it a summary of that "truth" which alone "can make us free" from the dominion of sin, and from the punishment due to it. This I consider as the most striking and lamentable error of the present times; and it is,

therefore, the more remarkable that such an error should not have been frequently and pointedly exposed. To adopt the language of an admirable living writer—"While the outworks of the sanctuary have been defended with the utmost ability, its interior has been too much neglected, and the fire upon the altar suffered to languish and decay. The truths and mysteries which distinguish the Christian from all other religions, have been little attended to by some, totally denied by others; and while infinite efforts have been made, by the utmost subtlety of argumentation, to establish the truth and authenticity of revelation, few have been exerted in comparison to show what it really contains."

Now the deficiency here adverted to is that which I have endeavoured to supply. I have attempted to exhibit in small compass a view, not merely of the Evidences, but of the distinguishing Doctrines, and principal Duties, of the Christian Religion. I have endeavoured to show that Christianity is not so contemptible and bungling a fraud as some infidels have represented it to be; and to point out at the same time many palpable and enormous absurdities into which Infidelity precipitates its votaries. But this I reckon the least important part of my undertaking, though I humbly hope it may have its uses. The facts of Christianity are only so far momentous as the doctrines are momentous which are suspended upon them. The

crucifixion of Jesus Christ would be no more to *us* (I mention it with reverence) than the death of Socrates, were it not that he suffered as a *sacrifice for sin;* and his resurrection of no more importance to us than the emancipation of a butterfly from its chrysalis, were it not for the assurance that "*even as he has risen*" *so shall all his faithful followers.* I have, therefore, entered pretty much at large into the establishment and defence of the leading doctrines which distinguish Christianity from all other religious systems. In the choice of these I have kept almost entirely out of sight the higher points which separate the Arminians and Calvinists; while I have attempted to illustrate and confirm, as essential, those grand doctrines in which both Arminians and Calvinists, and indeed the great majority of Christians, differ from Socinians. The truth is, that upon most of the questions which have long divided, and still continue to agitate, the Christian world, my mind is nearly in a state of perfect neutrality: so that I cannot bring myself to attach much importance to any question which is not obviously favourable or unfavourable in its moral tendency, or which does not appear to me *fundamental*, that is, which does not in some way affect the grand doctrine of man's redemption through the crucifixion of "the Son of God." With all Christians who in this respect "hold the head," and live conformably to the doctrines they profess, however they may be separated

upon minor topics, I am anxious to maintain, and long to see universally prevail, the "unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

I am willing to hope, indeed, that this spirit is gaining ground among us; and that *many* men are beginning to act upon the persuasion that every controversy agitated in the Christian Church upon points of inferior moment, causes a deduction, and in numerous instances a very serious one, from the regard paid to the really important objects of faith.

In attaining the objects proposed, I have not aimed at elaborate composition, or the elegances of style: believing that if my professional employments did not tend greatly to render success in such an attempt improbable, my real inability to dazzle by splendid imagery and profuse embellishment would. I have endeavoured to reason clearly and *fairly*; have availed myself of every argument I have met with in other authors that has suited my purpose; and have endeavoured to compress them into small space: and have, farther, had occasional recourse to some arguments which it is probable would not readily present themselves to any one who was not moderately conversant with scientific topics: these, it may be added, were frequently suggested by the consideration, that the gentleman for whose use they were originally written had successfully engaged in scientific pursuits.

I know not whether it may be necessary to

apologize for the frequency and extent of my quotations from Scripture, especially in the second volume. Let it be recollected that the main object of that volume is to teach the *doctrines* of Scripture; that is, to show what they are, to exhibit them faithfully: and to effect this without being allowed to cite the language of Scripture, would be, as Mr. Boyle long ago remarked, "to challenge a man to a duel, and oblige him not to make use of his best weapons; or to compel him to prove the torrid zone habitable, and not make use of the testimony of navigators." Besides, the maxim of Chillingworth, though old, has not yet been proved absurd; namely, "that we cannot speak of the *things* of God better than in the *words* of God."

I would fain hope that my references to other authors, or quotations from them, will not be ascribed to a desire to make a parade of extensive reading. My acquaintance with the works of other writers, and especially on the subject of religion, is, in truth, far less than it ought to be; and my object in such frequent references and extracts has been either to direct the attention of young men of reading to standard works on topics which my plan would not allow me to treat so fully as I wished, or to confirm and fortify my own sentiments by the authority of many whom the world in general consider as learned, wise, and, therefore, highly worthy of regard.

Lastly, I beg to remark, that I hope and trust the freedom of my occasional animadversions upon theologians from whom I differ on several topics discussed in these letters, has in no instance arisen from contempt of them, or their opinions, from uncandid interpretations of their language, or from unworthy personal feeling. My business has been to *attempt* to refute sentiments which I deem erroneous and dangerous, as well as to establish those which appear to me true and beneficial. It is possible, I am persuaded, to feel the strongest conviction of the errors certain men may hold, without cherishing a particle of ill will against those who hold them. And surely it is perfectly fair and perfectly candid, when theologians of a certain class endeavour to divest Christianity of almost every thing which (as I conceive) is peculiar to it, pride themselves upon the skill and dexterity with which they effect this, and triumph over what they denominate the irrational and contracted tenets of others; to turn the tables upon them, and to show that *their* system is clogged with its full load of absurdities and contradictions; that their mode of translation, if adopted universally, would rob the New Testament of its whole spirit, energy, and perspicuity; and that, by stripping the Christian system of its peculiarities, they deprive it nearly of all which renders it of consequence whether a man be a believer or an unbeliever. Under the influence of these sentiments, I shall conclude by adopting

the language of Dr. Jortin on another occasion: the following disquisitions "are designed, slight and imperfect as they are, for the service of TRUTH, by one who would be glad to attend, and grace her triumphs: *as her soldier*, if he has had the honour to serve successfully under her banner; or *as her captive*, tied to her chariot wheels, if he has, though undesignedly, committed any offence against her."

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

Oct. 11, 1811.

P. S. That successive editions of this Work should be required after the lapse of more than a quarter of a century from its first publication, is a circumstance which excites the most grateful feelings, at the same time that it has stimulated me to give the whole a very careful revisal, that it may be rendered more worthy public favour. I cannot but be highly gratified that my labours on the most interesting of all subjects should continue to be so favourably received: and still more to learn, that in various instances they have been the means of convincing persons, especially young men devoted to two of the learned professions (medicine and law), that "with the talent of an angel a man may be a fool," in the worst sense of the

word, unless he be "*wise unto salvation.*" Several have been reclaimed from the regions of *Infidelity*, and still more from *Socinianism*, not merely in England, but on the continent of Europe, in India, and America, by the blessing of God upon an attentive perusal of these "Letters." I had no other object in their publication; and can most sincerely declare that I wish them no longer to meet with encouragement than while they shall be useful in instilling into the minds and *hearts* of others, the essential, immutable principles which have always been found to work most efficaciously towards the renovation and salvation of mankind.

Royal Military Academy, Woolwich,
December, 1839.

CONTENTS.

LETTERS

ON THE

EVIDENCES, DOCTRINES, AND DUTIES,

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

LETTER I.

On the Folly and Absurdity of Deism.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WAS much gratified, on the arrival of your letter, to find that you had not forgotten me; and more gratified still to learn, that the important topic, on which we so often conversed when we were together, has as frequently occupied your thoughts since our separation. In this respect your conduct evinces your usual solicitude to inquire after truth of every kind, and I trust it will be followed by your accustomed success. While human existence is as much characterized by the uncertainty as by the shortness of its duration, and there is interposed between us and Heaven, or Hell, or annihilation, nothing but *life,* the most brittle and precarious thing imaginable;—while there is no cause for vanity in being involved in impenetrable darkness, and none for consolation; when we are in despair of ever finding a comforter, so long will it be the first and principal concern of a wise man, to inquire into his nature, his duties, and his expectations; to ascertain where he ought to doubt, where to be confident, and where to submit: and these inquiries necessarily comprise the subject of Religion. "*Who is wise, and he*

shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein[1]."

The derision with which some of your deistical companions affect to treat you, is matter of regret, but not of surprise. If their Deism be the result of supposed conviction, they are objects of pity; if, which is more likely to be the case, it be a consequence of indifference, and this deplorable indifference furnish them with a ground for boasting, *they*, instead of yourself, would be fit subjects for ridicule, were it proper to indulge such a propensity on so serious an occasion.

To a person of your extensive observation and contemplative turn of mind, it must appear extremely obvious, that as the vicious lives of many men make it their *interest* that religion in general should be "a bugbear," and the Christian Religion especially "an artful system of delusion;" so they will too commonly be found, not only ready, but *eager* to believe them really such. Nor can it be expected that they should stop here. For when once a certain method of treating a subject is nicely adapted to men's humours and situations, it would be strange, indeed, if they did not indulge in it; particularly when they find, as they soon will, that the majority of almost every company will cordially concur with them. If you wish to be proof against sneers and laughter, when directed against so momentous a subject, consider that the mirth and pleasure of the unthinking part of mankind (by far the greater part) are almost as blind and mechanical as the actions of an automaton. Let them be but struck, and they will move as mere inert matter moves, until the effect of the impulse ceases. They are stirred, and often *delighted;* though with what, or for what cause, or to what purpose, they know not. Except, perhaps, when the string of religion is roughly touched by the hand of an enemy; for then, many

[1] Hosea, xiv. 9.

ignorant, and all irreligious hearts, like chords in unison, vibrate to the motion, and yield the same sound; just as the clank of a madman's chain, while it thrills to the soul of a man in his senses, shall collect around him all the lunatics in the same ward of his prison, and tempt them to dance with maniac delight, when every spectator shudders with horror.

I have heard of some modern free-thinkers, whose comprehension of mind has placed them on such an eminence, that they look down with contempt, not only upon Christians, but upon the shrivelled minds of other unbelievers, who have not yet taken such an adventurous flight: some who not merely deride those whom half the world calls fanatics and visionaries, but who are seated in a "scorner's chair" of such peculiar qualities as enchant them till they sneer at the narrow prejudices of Hume and Gibbon, and Voltaire and Paine, whom they fancy they have discovered to be "as superstitious as washerwomen." Others have been impelled to still greater heights in this intellectual delirium. *They* contemplate with delight the prospect of a world without a Creator or a Governor; and boast of their *demonstrations*, by which they can convert any *sensible* man into an Atheist in a quarter of an hour; a transformation which, of course, would not be very difficult after they had explained to that sensible man, upon their own hypothesis, from whom he derived his sense. But the gentlemen, into whose company you are now so frequently thrown, do not, I presume, belong to either of these classes. It is more probable that some of them have embraced a kind of Semi-Atheism (I cannot think of a more appropriate term); a fine-spun theory, in conformity with which they persuade themselves that the Supreme Being does not govern the universe he created; but, after having covered it with living, and many of them *rational* beings, leaves them to console themselves with the cheering reflection that they are inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world—while HE, according to

this *comfortable* as well as *philosophical* notion, like a kind of Sardanapalus, sits at ease and surveys the goodly scene. If men who endeavour to disseminate such opinions ever cease to ridicule the maintainers of opposite sentiments, and condescend to argumentation, you might ask them to explain how it is possible that a derived being can be independent? You might inquire of them, whether that which is derived from another can exist *necessarily* in the first moment of its being? Whether that which does not exist necessarily in the first moment of its existence, can exist necessarily in the second, or in any succeeding instant? or, whether it must not owe its continued existence to the being by whom it was at first produced? If they be men of any acumen, they will at once perceive that, by supposing the existence of the being to continue when that on which it depended ceases, they would suppose it to be without the cause of its existence; and thus they would, by a kind of mental *felo-de-se*, support their hypothesis by destroying the superstructure on which it rests: so that, if they, to this acuteness which I have supposed them to possess, unite only common candour and openness to conviction, you would, by a very short process, make them ashamed of their fashionable Semi-atheism, and compel them to acknowledge that all the creatures of God do incessantly depend upon Him for the continuance of their existence. Thus will your opponents be forced to take the ground of pure Deism; and on that ground it is that you must meet them, if you have any wish to enter upon this momentous contest.

The opinions of Deists, from the time of Lord Herbert (the first and purest of the British free-thinkers) to the present period, have assumed such multifarious shapes, that it is difficult to state them in such a way as to be free from objection[2]. Nominal

[2] This extreme diversity of sentiments among the pretended philosophers who reject Christianity has not escaped the pointed notice of some of their own class. The following language of Rousseau,

Deism is separated into nearly as many climates and districts as nominal Christianity; so that, if Calvinism be placed in the torrid zone, and Socinianism in the polar regions of Christianity; you may with equal

descriptive of their conduct and contradictions, is highly worthy of attention:—"I have consulted our philosophers, I have perused their books, I have examined their several opinions, I have found them all proud, positive, and dogmatizing, even in their pretended scepticism, knowing every thing, proving nothing, and ridiculing one another; and this is the only point in which they concur, and in which they are right. Daring when they attack, they defend themselves without vigour. If you consider their arguments, they have none but for destruction; if you count their number, each one is reduced to himself; they never unite but to dispute; to listen to them was not the way to relieve myself from my doubts. I conceived that the insufficiency of the human understanding was the first cause of this prodigious diversity of sentiment, and that pride was the second. If our philosophers were able to discover truth, which of them would interest himself about it? Each of them knows that his system is not better established than the others; but he supports it, because it is his own: there is not one amongst them who, coming to distinguish truth from falsehood, would not prefer his own error to the truth that is discovered by another. Where is the philosopher, who, for his own glory, would not willingly deceive the whole human race? Where is he, who, in the secret of his heart, proposes any other object than his own distinction? Provided he can but raise himself above the commonalty, provided he can eclipse his competitors, he has reached the summit of his ambition. The great thing for him is to think differently from other people. Among believers, he is an Atheist, among Atheists, a believer. Shun, shun then, those who, under pretence of explaining nature, sow in the hearts of men the most dispiriting doctrines, whose scepticism is far more affirmative and dogmatical than the decided tone of their adversaries. Under pretence of being themselves the only people enlightened, they imperiously subject us to their magisterial decisions, and would fain palm upon us, for the true causes of things, the unintelligible systems they have erected in their own heads. Whilst they overturn, destroy, and trample under foot, all that mankind reveres, snatch from the afflicted the only comfort left them in their misery, from the rich and great the only curb that can restrain their passions; tear from the heart all remorse of vice, all hopes of virtue, and still boast themselves the benefactors of mankind. 'Truth,' they say, 'is never hurtful to man.' I believe that as well as they; *and the same, in my opinion, is a proof that what* they *teach is not the truth.*"—Rousseau, as quoted by M. Gandolphy, in his Defence of the Ancient Faith.

propriety imagine the sentiments of Herbert to occupy the equatorial regions, and those of Hume, Holcroft, and Godwin, the frigid zone of infidelity. Moderate Deists, however, and to such a candid reasoner would direct his arguments, profess to believe in one God, possessing natural and moral attributes, the former of which may be comprehended under power and knowledge, the latter under justice and benevolence; they believe, I presume, that virtue is that which is consistent with the will of God in act and motive; and yet that God has never made any revelation of his will to men; but that the collection of books which we receive *as such*, and consequently by way of distinction denominate THE SCRIPTURES, are in fact no such thing, but are the oldest, the most artful, and most successful collection of forgeries that ever was palmed upon the world.

And are they the apostles and disseminators of this heart-chilling system who wish to laugh you out of your religion? or rather, who are ridiculing you for the scrupulous attention with which you are investigating the evidences of Christianity, and for the solicitude you express that you may "be established in Faith and Holiness?" Let them enjoy the comforts of their supposed intellectual superiority, while you pursue your inquiry; and then you will in due time enjoy "the fruits of the Spirit," while they may haply retain all that fine flow of soul which so naturally results from the consciousness of being lost in a labyrinth of uncertainty. Do not suppose that the exultation so commonly manifested by these men, and which seems so much to have impressed your mind, is always natural. Confident as they often profess themselves to be, that unless you are a mere child in intellect you will soon think as they do; be assured, that in general their sarcasms and affected contempt originate in the apprehension that your sentiments will soon be diametrically opposite to theirs, and in their consequent eagerness to deter you from inquiry. Do not imagine that when

these your lively and laughing and witty companions leave you, their mirth and hilarity support them equally in solitude. Could you follow them into their retirements *without being witnessed*, or could you conceive the language of their souls to be formed into audible words, you might, without any breach of candour, fancy them soliloquizing in the language of Pascal:

"I hardly know who has sent me into the world. Nor know I what the world is, or what I am myself. I am shockingly ignorant of all things. I know not what my body is, what my senses are, or what my soul is. This very part of me, which thinks what I speak, which reflects upon itself and upon every thing round me, is yet as ignorant of itself, as it is of every thing else. I behold these frightful spaces of the universe with which I am encompassed, and feel myself confined to one little portion of the vast extent, without understanding why I am placed in this part of it rather than in any other; or why the short period of time that was allotted me to live was assigned to me at this particular point, rather than at any other, of the whole eternity which was before me, or of that which is to come after me. I see nothing but infinities on all sides, which swallow me up like an atom, or transform me to a shadow which endures but a single instant, and is never to return. All that I know is, that I must shortly die; but this very death, from which I cannot escape, is the thing of which I am the most ignorant.

"As I know not whence I came, so I know not whither I am going; only this I know, that, at my departure out of the world, I must either be for ever annihilated, or fall into the hands of an incensed GOD, without being able to decide which of these two conditions will be my everlasting portion.

"Such is my state, so full of weakness, darkness, and wretchedness. And from all this I conclude, that I ought to pass all the days of my life without ever considering what is hereafter to befall me: and that I

have nothing to do but to follow my inclinations without reflection or disquiet, doing all that which, if what is said of a miserable eternity, be true, will infallibly plunge me into it. It is *possible* I might find some light to dispel my doubts; but I will not take the trouble to stir one foot in search of it; rather, despising all those who *do* take pains in this inquiry, I am resolved to go on, without fear or foresight, and brave the grand event; I will pass as easily as I can out of life, and die utterly uncertain about the eternal state of my future existence."

If this be a fair representation of the strange process of thought often pursued by the generality of modern Deists, as I apprehend it is, you will agree with me, that it is an honour to religion to have such unreasonable men for its professed enemies, and to Christians, that such, or such *principally*, are their revilers.

Yet, as idolizers of reason, we cannot suppose that these gentlemen reject the Christian religion, and adopt the notions of Deism, without thinking they have found sufficient reasons for the preference. Let us, my friend, by instituting a short comparison, see if we can discover them. Can a Deist arrive at his convictions by any thing like the following gradation?

Christianity reveals a God, glorious in holiness; Deism, though it acknowledges a God, yet in great measure overlooks his moral character: therefore I prefer Deism. Christianity contains a professed revelation of the will of God; Deism leaves me in perfect darkness as to his will: therefore I prefer Deism. Christianity exhibits palpable, obvious, and simple criteria of the nature of virtue and vice; Deism envelopes the nature of virtue and vice in the greatest doubt and perplexity: therefore I prefer Deism. Christianity furnishes the strongest possible motives for virtuous conduct, and the most cogent reasons for abstaining from vicious conduct; Deism appeals only to some vague notions relative to the fitness of things, or to moral beauty, or to expediency, which makes a

man's own sentiments and feelings, however fluctuating, his ultimate guide: therefore I prefer Deism. Christianity *often* reforms profligate and vicious men; Deism *never:* therefore I prefer Deism. Christianity frequently prompts men to schemes of the most extensive philanthropy, and compels them to execute those schemes; Deism scarcely ever devises any such schemes: therefore I prefer Deism. Christianity imparts principles that support men under all the trials and vicissitudes of life; Deism can have recourse to no such principles: therefore I prefer Deism. Christianity assures me of eternal existence beyond the grave; and that, if it is not to me a state of eternal felicity, it will be my own fault: Deism leaves me perfectly ignorant, let my conduct here be what it may, whether I shall live beyond the grave or not; whether such existence, if there be any, will be limited or infinite; happy or miserable: therefore I prefer Deism. Christianity will support me under the languishments of a sick bed, and in the prospect of death, with the "sure and certain hope," that death is only a short though sometimes dark passage into "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven" for God's people: Deism will then leave me, sinking in an ocean of gloomy apprehension, without *one* support—in trembling expectation, that the icy hand of the king of terrors is about to seize me; but whether to convey me to Heaven, to Hell, or to a state of annihilation, I know not; therefore I prefer ——: no, my friend, it is impossible that any man capable of correct reflection can, after tracing this contrast, say, deliberately and sincerely,—*therefore I prefer Deism.*

The reasons, then, which weigh with a Deist must be different from the above. Perhaps you may be told, that the difficulties attending the belief of Christianity are very numerous and great, while the mere reception of the principles of Deism is in a considerable degree free from difficulty, or at least presents no difficulties

against which one's mind can strenuously revolt. To ascertain the force of this assertion, let us endeavour to collect into one point of view the chief propositions which must necessarily be included in the creed of a Deist: and I am much mistaken if they will not furnish us with some cogent reasons for wishing Christianity *may* be true, independent of all those that result from its own intrinsic beauty, value, and excellency.

Here, again, we will suppose a Deist speaking; delivering, if I may so call it, in his own person, "A confession of his Faith." And after you have attended to this declaration, I think you will coincide with me in opinion, that the credulity of unbelievers is the most marvellous thing imaginable—the rejectors of the Gospel, the most resolute believers in the world; or with Soame Jenyns, that they "must be possessed of much more faith than is necessary to make them declared Christians, and remain unbelievers from mere credulity." The creed of a Deist, so far as I am able to comprehend his principles, would run thus:

1. I believe that God is a being of matchless holiness, wisdom, power, and benevolence; that in consequence of his holiness, He "cannot look upon iniquity with satisfaction;" that His wisdom would enable him to contrive, His power to execute, and His benevolence stimulate him to accomplish, the most effectual plans for the establishment of virtue and the suppression of vice; for the extinction of mental and moral darkness, and the diffusion of mental and moral light: and yet, that God has suffered mankind in every age, and in almost every country, to remain in the grossest ignorance and darkness, for nearly 6000 years; to struggle with prejudices, to immerse themselves in the blackest and most dismal crimes, to perform the most horrid and murderous rites, and fancy them religious services;—that He makes the being who possesses the finest faculties to be the greatest enemy to his species,—and thus to plunge himself and others into the deepest miseries:—and all this in consequence of His never

affording them the remotest aid,—never supplying them with any invariable principles as preservatives against error, or any specific rules by which they should shape their conduct. That is, I believe this palpable contradiction, that the goodness of God has allowed this horridly miserable state of mankind to continue for so many centuries, and has all along prompted him to refuse them any effectual aid or direction.

2. I believe that what is called the Mosaic account of the Creation of the World, and the Fall of Man, is a mere Fable; and therefore I believe that God, the wisest and the best of beings, created man with the most noble, refined, and extraordinary faculties of body and mind, faculties infinitely superior to what are possessed by other living creatures; that while *they* eat, and drink, and sleep, unconscious of what shall befall them, *he* may indulge the doubtful anticipation intermingled with frequent *dread* of future occurrences; and that while *they* are supplied with all that is necessary for their subsistence without either "toiling or spinning," *man*, the Lord of the creation, is so circumstanced, that, "by the sweat of his brow," the labour of his hands, and the anxiety of his mind, he shall earn and "eat bread:" I also believe that the same infinitely wise and benevolent Being formed woman with delicacy of perception, sweetness of disposition, tenderness of heart, and beauty of frame, far above all we could conceive, did we not witness them, in order that "*her sorrow and her conception shall be greatly multiplied*," that *she* "*shall bring forth children in sorrow*," (while other animals suffer but little comparatively in bearing and bringing forth their young): and that she shall be formed exquisitely susceptible of all the emotions of love, in order that "*her desire may be to her husband, and that he may* RULE *over her*." That is, I will not believe that these are the effects of just punishment; but believe that they are marks of *hard treatment* from the wisest and best of beings towards the most exalted part of his

visible creation. I know there is no possible medium between these alternatives; but I reject the former because it is reasonable, and revealed in the Bible; and adopt the latter because it is unreasonable, and revealed nowhere.

3. I believe that the book called the Bible was, every word of it, invented and written by men who had no help from God: that what are called *Prophecies* were not such; that what are denominated *Miracles* were either tricks of art, or never occurred; and that though the precepts are often admirable, and the morality pure, it proceeded from impostors, and not from God: the whole book being a collection of delusions and deceptions; which God nevertheless suffered to be accompanied by such evidence to gain it belief, as is not possessed by any other book.

4. I believe that bad men are often made better through the influence of this strange system of lies, delusions, and impostures; and that those who *were* good men often become bad, as soon as they are wise enough to free themselves from such influence, and to cast off the shackles with which this system encumbered them.

5. I believe that several of the best scholars, the ablest disputants, the most acute lawyers, the subtlest metaphysicians, the most cautious investigators, and the most profound philosophers that ever lived, such as Sir Thomas More, Grotius, Hale, Bacon, Barrow, Locke, Hartley, Boyle, Pascal, Euler, Newton, and many others, were never able to detect the cheat, but lived as much under the influence of this system of bold and blasphemous deception, as the most vulgar and illiterate peasant could do;—and were, the majority of them, very excellent men notwithstanding.

6. I believe that the different persons who employed themselves at various times, and in different places, to compose the Bible, which avows itself, by a thousand most solemn and explicit declarations, to be a collection of communications from heaven, were not madmen

(for that supposition is untenable), but all shocking liars, and deceivers; that these wicked men, who thus impiously pretended to be employed by God, when they were not so employed, did, notwithstanding, with an amazing energy, resolution, and perseverance, go about doing good, and delivering the most important moral precepts: braving, and often sustaining, the greatest present evils; not *one* of them ever recanting or discovering the fraud; but supporting themselves in the daily diffusion of their noble precepts and detestable impostures, and the terrible sufferings which they thereby had to sustain, by the conviction that they had no hope but of experiencing further hardships here, and the vengeance of the God whom they had insulted—hereafter.

Lastly; I believe that the Great Being of infinite perfections, who sits enthroned at the head of the universe, has seen this horrid delusion prevail more and more for nearly two thousand years; yet, instead of interposing to stay its progress, has suffered it to be accompanied with the most remarkable apparent sanctions, and has often accelerated its promulgation by the most surprising occurrences. That is, I believe that the God of truth has, with regard to what is called the Christian Religion, most astonishingly aided imposture. All this, I acknowledge, is perfectly incomprehensible, and totally irreconcilable with the obvious attributes of Deity; but it is consistent with the principles of Deism, however repugnant it may be to common sense, and therefore I believe it.

If these and similar absurdities, my friend, result from the rejection of Revelation (and, as far as I am able to judge, they are not merely fair, but *necessary* consequences of such rejection), your deistical acquaintances cannot have so much reason as they suppose, to pride themselves on that noble exercise of their understanding which has freed them from vulgar prejudices and sordid restraints. Is there not, hence, too much reason to fear, that in a great majority of

instances, Deism springs more from the state of the heart than from the operations of intellect? and that it is not so much because Christianity offends the reason, as because it condemns the conduct, of men, that they affect to despise it? They commence their progress with a carelessness respecting their future interests; in the language of Young, they

"Give to time eternity's regard,
And, dreaming, take their passage for their port."

Gliding along thus carelessly, it is natural enough that they should sink,—first into error,—next into vice. In such a situation, an inquiry into the evidences of Revealed Religion is not instituted under very favourable auspices; for the inquirer has his mind overgrown with the worst of all prejudices, those that are rooted in *interest*. How should a man be indifferent as to the truth of a system, which, *if true*, must condemn him? Though his life may not be grossly immoral, he knows that the tenor of his conduct is incompatible with the renunciations and requirements of real religion. He comes, therefore, to the trial, not as an impartial judge, but as a party deeply interested in the issue. He in consequence *wishes* that Christianity may not be true; and what a man fervently wishes, he can easily persuade himself to believe,—though he should involve himself in a thousand absurdities in consequence of that persuasion.

You, my friend, have happily entered upon this important inquiry, free from the lamentable incumbrances of vice: that it may be so pursued, as to be the means of preserving you from the deistical delusions to which I have adverted in this letter,—delusions, as derogatory to the intellectual, as they are dangerous to the moral, character of man;—is the most earnest wish of

Your sincere Friend.

Royal Military Academy, May, 1809.

LETTER II.

On the Necessity of a Revelation of the Will of God.

When you request, my dear Friend, that I will not let the letter I recently sent you, terminate the remarks I mean to transmit on the subject of Religion, but that I will allow you to consider it as the first of a series which I shall devote to the discussion of the Evidences, Doctrines, and Duties of Christianity, you propose to me a task, which, however willing I may be to undertake it on your account, will, I am aware, be attended with some difficulty, and require much time and meditation. The difficulty does not arise from the paucity and scantiness of the materials that lie before me, and the consequent necessity of exercising original or inventive powers to produce such argumentative matter as may convince a candid inquirer; but from the extreme copiousness of the subject, the abundance and variety of the means by which it has been established, confirmed, and illustrated, and the judgment requisite to draw out of an immense mass, to which men of learning and piety in all ages of the Church have contributed, those particulars which may be best calculated to impress the mind, and to call forth both a rational and practical conviction. The lively interest, however, which I feel in all that concerns you, and my extreme solicitude that you should think correctly and act wisely in relation to this most momentous of all topics, induce me to comply with your wishes, notwithstanding the embarrassment in which such compliance may sometimes involve me. I have only to premise, before I pursue the inquiry you have suggested, that as, on the one hand, I do not expect you will assent to every proposition I shall advance, but will be determined by the aggregate impression resulting from the whole; so, on the other, *you* must not expect to be entertained with novelties, or fascinated with beauties.

"Nullum est jam dictum, quod non dictum prius." Ter.

My objects will be to select—not to invent; to convince—not to compel; to instruct—not to delight; to persuade—not to enchant: and if I shall be so fortunate as to effect these without occupying very much of your time;—if I shall save you the fatigue of turning over many a ponderous volume, and the vexation of reading many in vain (through the want of a judicious friend at hand to direct your choice);—if I can compress into small compass the most essential arguments that are diffused through numerous works of various authors in different ages, and the result of my labour be beneficial to you; I shall have the satisfaction, the purest allotted to man, of having exerted myself successfully in a good cause.

Having premised this, I may venture to remark, that if the train of argumentation in my former letter be calculated to make any impression, it is, that the absurdities of Deism render a Revelation of the will of God probable. It may also be inferred further, that what we may naturally expect from the character of God renders such a revelation more probable; and we may now observe, that the state of men renders it *necessary*. It indeed seems extremely unlikely, that the Divine Being would have suffered mankind to fall into such great apostasy from him as is every where manifest, without intending to render them assistance through which they may be recovered. He has made provision in the natural world for the removal of bodily disorders; can we then imagine that he will be altogether regardless of the much more dangerous diseases of the mind? It is, for example, a most deplorable degree of blindness to live utterly unconcerned about what we are; and it is a far more tremendous thing to live wickedly, to live as "without God in the world," when we are surrounded with his essence, and believe in his existence: yet the greater part of mankind are under one or other of these dismal infatuations; and there can be no reason assigned why they should ever be otherwise, unless they are roused from their slum-

ber, or checked in their irreligious courses, by the voice of the Deity.

Leave man to himself, and to his own efforts, even when most actively inclined, and what can he accomplish? He is evidently formed for thinking; his intellectual part gives dignity to his character: to think correctly constitutes a prime duty; correct thinking is manifested in his contemplating himself, his author, and his end; and yet, how commonly does he neglect these inquiries to pursue trifling vanities, and "waste his strength in that which profiteth not?" Or suppose he directs his *unassisted* intellectual energies into a more suitable channel, what does he effect? He has an idea, an inward perception of truth, not to be effaced by the sophistry of the sceptic; yet, on the most important topics, he has an incapacity of argument scarcely to be rectified but by supernatural aid. He seeks virtue, and at the close of life may exclaim with Brutus that *the virtue he pursued was but a shadow*. He wishes for truth, and obtains nothing but uncertainty. He pants after happiness, and finds only misery in substance, or the vacuity of disappointment. He is incapable of ceasing to wish both for truth and happiness; and yet perceives that he is equally incapable of attaining either. He is also subject to a perpetual war between his reason and his passions. Had he reason without passions, or passions without reason, he might enjoy something like repose; but, actuated as he is by both, he lives in perpetual disquiet; finding it impossible to yield himself to the guidance of the one, without experiencing the consequences of rebellion to the other. Hence he is always at variance with himself,—always under the influence of contending principles; and how is he to emancipate himself from this thraldom? Suppose he seeks for freedom and repose, by pursuing the speculations of *Natural* Religion. He endeavours to lay the foundations of duty, to establish rules of conduct; he attempts to put them in practice, and *fails*. He is compelled to

acknowledge himself a wanderer, and often doubtless a *wilful* wanderer from the path of rectitude. He reasons, without knowing it, upon the principles of an Apostle, who said, "*if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and will condemn us also;*" and is thus led to institute inquiries relative to the pardon of sin, the nature, duration, misery, or happiness of a future state; respecting all which he finds it impossible to remove difficulties, or to be freed from the most trembling anxiety:

> "The wide, the unbounded prospect lies before him;
> But shadows, clouds, and darkness, rest upon it."

Even of those things which such an inquirer may be able to unravel to his own satisfaction, there will be many in which it will be extremely difficult to convey a satisfactory impression to *others;* considering, on the one hand, how abstruse many of his arguments will be; and, on the other, that ignorance, indolence, prejudice, and secular cares, will, according to their individual or combined existence and influence, prevent the generality of persons from inquiring into the truth of what he proposes, as well as from investigating these matters for themselves.

Could the doubts which envelope the subject of Natural Religion be dispelled by any one philosopher, to his own satisfaction, yet he *might* want the inclination, or, if he possessed that, he *must* want the power, to make others adopt his views, and thus taste his enjoyments. Or, could the great doctrines of religion and the rules of morality be settled, and proposed and taught, ever so plainly or frequently, yet it would be difficult, or indeed impossible, to enforce the practice of them. A system of ethics may be considered, by those who acquaint themselves with it, as extremely ingenious; but it is entirely optional whether they will or will not adopt it as a rule of conduct; and the experience of all ages shows that it is perfectly ridiculous to expect that any such system should ever be consi-

dered as binding. Even were human laws established in aid of it, it would still be inefficacious; for no secular power, however it may restrain from crimes, can produce a single action that shall be truly and essentially virtuous[1]. Either, then, God himself must interpose and favour us with rules of virtue, and motives to the practice of it, such as it is difficult to withstand,—or the world must necessarily sink deeper and deeper into vice and misery. To admit the latter is to deny that the Supreme Being interests himself about the welfare of those whom he created and governs. Since, therefore, God is a Being of matchless justice, mercy, and bounty, it follows, irrefragably, that if the deficiencies of natural reason, or the inattention of mankind to the footsteps of his providence, were such at any time (and such they *have* been) that all the inhabitants of the world were in danger of being lost in ignorance, irreligion, and idolatry, then would God interpose by extraordinary instruction, by alarming instances of judgment or of mercy, by events beyond human anticipation or control, by prophetical declarations of things to come,—that is, by a supernatural revelation of his will, to make us better acquainted with his attributes and our own character,—to point out to us the path of duty, to draw us from the vanities of the world, and to lead us to himself.

I am, &c.

June, 1809.

[1] Similar to this was the reasoning of Tertullian, in his admirable Apologetic (cap. 45). "Your systems of virtue (says he) are but the conjectures of human philosophy, and the power which commands obedience, merely human · so that neither the rule nor the power is indisputable; and hence the one is too imperfect to instruct us fully, the other too weak to command us effectually: but both these are abundantly provided for by a revelation from God. Where is the philosopher who can so clearly demonstrate the true good, as to fix the notion beyond dispute? And what human power is able to reach the conscience, and bring down that notion into practice? Human wisdom is as liable to error, as human power is to contempt." See also cap. 18, of the same piece.

LETTER III.

On the Opinions of the Heathens, their Legislators, Poets, and Philosophers, relative to God, to Moral Duty, and a Future State.

It is not surprising, my dear Friend, that your philosophical companions should endeavour to persuade you, in opposition to the train of argument in my last letter, that unassisted reason not only can discover, but *has* discovered, all that is necessary to be known, as it regards our duty or our expectations. The powers of the intellect, notwithstanding their defects and their limitations, have doubtless done much in every department of art, of literature, and of science: and those who are best able to estimate the value of intellectual productions, are probably, for that very reason, apt to ascribe to the mind much more than it can really accomplish. Besides this, several of the philosophers who have indulged in moral speculations since the æra of the Christian revelation, and even those who have been the warmest opposers of that revelation, have derived, indirectly, from the source to which they would disdain to apply directly, many highly important truths, many valuable rules of conduct, many powerful incentives to virtue: they have thus travelled by a torch snatched from the temple of God, while both themselves and their followers idly imagine their path is illuminated by light of their own creating. Thus, the later Platonists, Plotinus, Porphyry, Jamblicus, and Hierocles, are well known to have been pupils of *Ammonius* of Alexandria, a *Christian*, and the tutor of Origen: whence it happens that the Christian Fathers were accused of Platonizing; instead of which the truth is, that the philosophers just mentioned filched from the Christian repository. But, to judge correctly in this respect, let us inquire what was effected in

morals and religion by the intellectual energies of the great and learned men and philosophers who existed *previously* to the dawn of "the Sun of righteousness[1]." Such an inquiry will place the subject in a proper point of view; nor can it be thought uncandid towards the advocates of unassisted reason, when it is recollected that, whatever may have been the mental stature of Bolingbroke, and Gibbon, and Hume, and Voltaire, they would appear diminutive enough when placed by the side of Aristotle, and Socrates, and Plato, and Seneca. If, then, this research, conducted with as much regard to brevity as its nature will admit, shall evince the inferiority of the principal ethical and religious systems of the ancients to the Christian scheme, or shall show their inefficacy to restrain from vice, or to incite to virtue, we shall possess an additional argument for the necessity of Revelation, as well as a cogent proof that the system which is so infinitely superior to all that has been produced by the greatest of uninspired men, must have emanated from Him who is "the Father of lights," physical and mental.

[1] Indeed there is great reason to believe, that nothing *strictly* speaking, in morals or theology, was the genuine result of the mental efforts of the wisest ancient heathens. Many of them were candid enough to profess to have derived what knowledge they had, not merely from the exertions of their reason, but from a higher source, even from very ancient traditions, to which they usually assigned *a divine original*. "What Socrates said of the Deity (observes Dryden in the Preface to *Religio Laici*), what Plato writ, and the rest of the heathen philosophers of several nations, is all no more than the twilight of revelation, after the sun of it was set in the race of Noah." Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and Eusebius, all prove that Plato especially learned much from the Hebrews while he was in Egypt. Hence flows an observation which operates two ways in favour of religion, and doubly evinces the goodness of God in his dispensations towards mankind; for we may learn that He prepared a way in his providence for the *traditionary* dissemination of the principal moral truths he revealed to our first parents: and it will appear farther, I trust, in the course of this work, that at the very period when the light originally communicated had well nigh become extinct, He introduced the full blaze of the gospel dispensation.

Now, as to the heathens generally, though it was commonly admitted among them that the formation of the world was owing to chance, yet many of them ascribed it to a plurality of causes or authors: and even those who acknowledged one Supreme Being corrupted the doctrine of the *unity*, by making him to be of the same nature as the other gods, though of a higher order. And thus originated the custom of the priests, who, in all their sacred ceremonies and devotions, after addressing themselves to the especial deities to whom it was necessary at each particular time to offer up prayers or sacrifices, were wont to invoke *all the gods in general*. It was, besides, a universal notion among them, that the Supreme God did not concern himself with the affairs of this world, but committed them wholly to inferior deities; whence sprang their idolatry, and the habit of neglecting the worship of the Supreme God, or of confounding it with that of the multitude of idol-deities. They first deviated from the worship of one God, to the worshiping heaven and the heavenly bodies; then to the worship of heroes and deified men; then they turned the names and attributes of God into distinct divinities, and worshiped them as such; then they paid divine honours to the images and symbols of the gods; and then they deified whatever was useful in human life, however mean,—and the qualities, affections, and dispositions of the human mind, however grovelling and despicable. It did not suffice with them to worship oxen, and burn incense to crocodiles and serpents. It did not satisfy them merely to metamorphose beasts into gods, but they conversely transformed their gods into beasts, ascribing to them drunkenness, sodomy, and the most loathsome vices.* Drunkenness they worshiped under the name of *Bacchus;* lasciviousness under that of *Venus*. *Momus* was with them the god of calumny, and *Mercury* the god of thieves. How little scrupulous would they be respecting adultery and rebellion, when they considered *Jupiter*, the greatest of their gods, to

be an adulterer and a rebellious son. The consequence of all this was that, at length, the worship of avowedly *evil* beings became very prevalent. Hence many of their rites were cruel and contrary to humanity; and hence the licentiousness and impurity of their religion and worship became notorious. Thus, to select only one or two instances out of many, the rites of the goddess Cybele were no less infamous for lewdness than for cruelty; and these impure customs spread far and wide. Strabo relates that there was a temple of Venus at Corinth so rich that it maintained above a thousand harlots sacred to her service, ἱεροδούλας ἑταίρας, which were consecrated both by men and women to that goddess. And Eusebius[2] is compelled to use language, when describing the height of wickedness and impurity the *worship* of the heathens attained, which no virtuous man can read without shuddering. Well might it be said of the heathens by an Apostle, "God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts." The vices and enormities in which the heathens indulged were not checked by any suitable restraining motive: for whatever might be the speculative opinions of one or two philosophers, who were influenced to believe the immortality of the soul by very fanciful reasonings[3], the belief of a future state was totally set at nought by the majority of both Greeks and Romans. Thus, according to Plato, the doctrine taught by Socrates, concerning the immor-

[2] Præpar. Evangel. lib. ii. cap. 6, p. 74. The reader may however find, in the Octavius of Minutius Felix, an account of the heathen gods and worship, delivered in a fine strain of irony, with the suppression of the grosser circumstances.

[3] As *Pythagoras*, who we are informed by Diogenes Laertius (in *Pythag.*) held that the human soul is a portion of the *ether* (ἀπόσπασμα αἰθέρος), and therefore immortal, because the ether is so. And *Pliny* the naturalist, speaking thus of Hipparchus, gives at the same time his own opinion:—"The never enough commended Hipparchus, being one than whom no one more fully approved the relation of the stars to man, and the opinion of *our souls being a part of the heaven*, Animasque nostras partem esse cœli. Nat. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 26.

tality of the soul and a future state, "met with little credit among men; and indeed Socrates himself remarked that the opinion of the soul's being *blown away*, and perishing with the body, prevailed generally. Polybius also complains that in his time the belief of a future state was rejected both by the great men and the bulk of the people, and he ascribes to this disbelief the great corruption of manners: though even Polybius, while he blames the great men among the Greeks for encouraging the people to disbelieve and despise future punishments, represents them as only *useful fictions*. How much the disbelief of future retributions prevailed at Rome is evident from one of Cæsar's orations on the Catiline conspiracy; and Cato's reply, in which he said, "Cæsar looked upon those things to be fables which are related concerning the *Inferi*, where bad men, far from the mansions of the virtuous, are confined to abodes, dreary, abominable, and full of horrors." Long after the time of Cæsar the like contempt of an awful futurity was entertained: for Pliny the naturalist labours hard to expose the absurdity of ascribing accountable immortality to the soul, and says "that these are childish and senseless fictions of mortals, who are ambitious of a never-ending existence." "Puerilium ista deliramentorum, avidæque nunquam desinere mortalitatis commenta sunt[4]."

That a contempt and disbelief of future punishments weakened the *fear* of God, is obvious: and as to the *love* of God, that noble principle which is evidently fitted to produce the most elevated degrees of moral uprightness, and a happiness corresponding to our sublimest desires, the heathens were utter strangers to it. And with regard to their conduct towards one another, it must not be forgotten that none of them recognised the exalted principle of *loving enemies*. I am aware that some have affirmed that this principle was taught in the Grecian schools, and have referred to the Gorgias of Plato in proof of their assertion. But

[4] Hist. Nat. lib. vii. cap. 55.

if we attend duly to the whole conversation of Socrates, there related, we shall find that, instead of teaching the forgiveness of injuries, the love of enemies, and the duty of "doing good to them that hate us," he inculcates the indulgence of the most refined, and according to his own statement, the most baleful malice towards those who have injured us. The substance of his reasoning is this: "You allow that moral excellence is the greatest good. You allow also that the punishment of offences is one mean of reforming the authors of them. If then our enemy has injured us, the greatest good we can bestow upon him is to bring him to a court of justice, and inflict the vengeance of the law. Then by no means punish your enemy for having injured you, for so *you defeat your own purpose of revenge.* Leave him to the whole, uncontrolled, uncounteracted influence of his moral depravity, *because that is the greatest evil which can be endured.*"

It appears then, that the heathen world, and especially the Greeks and Romans, of whom we know most because they were most refined, were in a state of gross darkness and ignorance with respect to the knowledge of God, of themselves, and of those moral relations and obligations in which they stood to the Supreme Being, and to one another. Their incentives to virtue were few and weak; their motives to avoid vice inefficacious and founded on a wrong basis. Nor was this the case with regard to the populace merely: their Legislators, Poets, and Philosophers held the most erroneous opinions: or promulgated right sentiments, when they had discovered them, upon wrong principles. Thus, with regard to LEGISLATORS, it is well known that from *political* views they established and encouraged the worship of those who had once been men, and took them into the number of their gods. Consistently with this, Cotta observes, that in most cities it was usual, in order to encourage men to hazard their lives for the commonwealth, to take those who had been eminent for their fortitude into the number of their

gods. This indeed is expressly prescribed by Cicero, in his second book of laws (cap. viii.) where he requires that those should be worshiped whom their merits had called into heaven. It is also a general observation, which applies to the whole civil theology of the pagans, that of the Romans as well as of the other heathen nations, that the public worship which was instituted by their more celebrated legislators, and prescribed and established by the laws of their several cities and countries, was paid to a *multiplicity of deities*. They were therefore encouraged, or rather *compelled*, to be polytheists, by law.

It has, I am aware, been urged by some, that the legislators who established the pagan mysteries designed thereby to overthrow the vulgar polytheism. But, in opposition to this, it has been shown by Bishop Warburton that "the legislators and magistrates who first instituted the mysteries, and continued to have the chief direction of them, had the principal hand in the rise of that polytheism, and contrived it for the sake of the state, to keep the people in awe, and under a greater veneration for their laws."

So far, indeed, was it from being the fact that heathen legislators discountenanced polytheism, that the whole tenour of ancient records goes to establish the contrary. Thus, Stobæus informs us, it was one of the laws of Charondas, "Let the contempt of *the gods* be reckoned among the *greatest crimes*." And at Athens every citizen was bound by oath to defend and conform to the religion of his country. This oath was in the name of the gods, and concluded thus: "I swear by these following deities, the Agrauli, Enyalius, Mars, Jupiter, the Earth, and Diana[5]."

Nor did the legislators inculcate erroneous notions with regard to the Gods alone. Their laws, established for the express purpose of furthering the public virtue and happiness, had often a highly unfavourable effect upon both. I shall here only specify a few of those of

[5] Potter's Greek Antiquities, vol. i.

Lycurgus, because the united voice of antiquity speaks of him as rather a god than a man; and Plutarch produces him as "an undeniable proof that a perfectly wise man is not a mere notion and chimera." I am not inclined to deny that many of the laws of Lycurgus are very excellent; yet I must be permitted to think that some things, enacted by this "perfectly wise man," counteracted the practice of virtue. Plato, though a great admirer of Lycurgus, acknowledges that his laws were rather fitted to make men valiant than just. Aristotle makes the same observation. And even Plutarch confesses that some persons censured the laws of Lycurgus as well contrived to make men good soldiers, but *very defective in civil justice and honesty.* Many of his laws were contrary to humanity; and hence it happened that the conduct of the Lacedæmonians to their slaves, the helotes, was proverbially cruel. They had, besides, a custom, encouraged by their laws, of whipping boys to death at the altar of Diana Orthia. Lycurgus also enacted that deformed infants should not be suffered to live, but be cast into a cavern to perish gradually! Healthy boys, on the contrary, were to be treated charitably, and trained up to *dexterous thieving;* but to be whipped unmercifully if they were taken in the fact, not for stealing, but for being such bunglers as to expose themselves to detection. I will only add farther, under this head, that the Spartans had common baths, in which both men and women were *compelled* to bathe, together; and that it was ordered by Lycurgus that the young maidens should appear naked in the public exercises, as well as the young men; and that they should dance naked with them at the solemn festivals and sacrifices. These, you will remember, are among the legislative enactments of one whom we are to respect as a "perfectly wise man;" are laws which a learned, grave, and philosophic heathen, Plutarch, justifies and commends, seeming scarcely conscious, except in one instance, that it would be possible to censure them.

Allow me next to speak of the heathen POETS, whose influence upon the opinions and practices of the people was naturally great. They were, indeed, the prophets and chief instructors of the people, and were looked upon, even by Socrates and Plato, as divinely inspired. Now, how did they maintain the ancient tradition of one Supreme God? Why, truly, by confounding him with their Jupiter, by bringing him to a level with this the chief of their idol-deities, of whom they made the most indelicate representations. Instead of exerting the powers of their imagination to array the Deity in the sublimity of grandeur, or even in pointing to the obscurity which invests the most incomprehensible of all beings, and

——" With the majesty of *darkness* round
Circles his throne :' ——

they invented ideal gods of all classes, and for all purposes, even the most base and ignoble: they deified the inanimate parts of the world; they ascribed to their deities passions and propensities the most odious and abominable; and instead of describing the gods as beings worthy of imitation, and giving richness and elevation of character to men by the contemplation of *their* excellence, they lowered and debased the sentiments of those who were already "of the earth, earthy," by calling their attention to monstrous and indecent stories of the intrigues of heaven. The poetical theology, it is true, was disapproved by some of the wiser pagans; yet it was carefully wrought into the popular religion, and lay at the foundation of most of their sacred rites. Those poetical fables which Varro and Tully[6] censure as unworthy of the gods, and as imputing to them actions which none but the vilest of men could be guilty of, were not only permitted to be acted on the public theatres, but were regarded as things pleasing to the gods themselves, and were ac-

[6] Fingebat hæc Homerus, et humana ad deos transferebat, divina mallem ad nos. Tuscul. Disput. lib. i. cap. 26.

cordingly incorporated with the public and established religion.

The effusions of the heathen poets have also a deplorably mischievous tendency, on account of the manner in which they almost uniformly speak of the state after death. On some few occasions, it is true, they introduce the idea of rewards and punishments to make a part of the poetical machinery: yet, frequently they express themselves as though they thought death brought an utter extinction of being. Plutarch, in his consolation to Apollonius, quotes this passage of an ancient poet, that no grief or evil touches the dead,

῎Αλγος γὰρ ὄντως ὀδὲν ἅπτεται νεκρῳ.

He there also quotes another passage from a poet, declaring that the dead man is in the same condition that he was before he was born. The first of these passages is ascribed by Stobæus to Æschylus. So again, Moschus, Idyll. iii. lin. 107, having observed that herbs and plants, after seeming to die, yet revive in the succeeding year, subjoins,

Αμμες δ᾽ ὁι μεγαλοι, και καρτεροι, η σοφοι ανδρες,
Ὁπποτε πρωτα θανωμες ανακοοι εν χθονι κοιλᾳ
Ευδομες ΕΥ ΜΑΛΑ ΜΑΚΡΟΝ, ΑΤΕΡΜΟΝΑ, ΝΗΓΡΕΤΟΝ
ὑπνον.

But we, or great, or wise, or brave,
Once dead and silent in the grave,
Senseless remain ; one rest we keep,
One *long*, *eternal*, *unawaken'd* sleep.

There are passages of the same kind in Epicharmus, in Sophocles, Euripides, and Astydamas, referred to by Dr. Whitby[7].

Both the Greek and Roman poets drew arguments from the consideration that life is short, and death will *entirely* terminate our existence, to urge men to lay hold of the present opportunity, and give a full indulgence to their appetites; according to the libertine

[7] Whitby's Commentary on 2 Tim. i. 10.

maxim, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Several passages of this kind may be found in Strato, and others of the Greeks. Catullus has a notorious passage to the same purpose, which, often as it has been quoted, must once more be adduced;—

> "Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus——
> Soles occidere et redire possunt:
> Nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
> *Nox est perpetua una dormienda.*"

Imitated thus by Baker:

> "The sun that sets again will rise,
> And give the day, and gild the skies;
> But when we lose our little light,
> *We sleep in everlasting night.*"

Thus also Horace:

> "Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam
> *Jam nox te premet, fabulæque Manes.*"

Persius, again, represents it as the language of many in his time.

> "Indulge genio: carpamus dulcia. nostrum est
> Quod vivis: cinis et Manes et fabula fies."

Quotations to this effect may be multiplied at pleasure, by any person who is conversant with the productions of the classic poets. I shall only select two more; the first from Seneca the tragedian:

> "*Post mortem nihil est,* ipsaque mors nihil—
> Quæris quo jaceas post obitum loco,
> Quo non nata jacent."

And lastly from Virgil, Æn. x.:

> "Olli dura quies occulos, et *ferreus* urget,
> *Somnus,* in *æternum* clauduntur lumina *noctem.*"

We have now seen that the sentiments of the legislators and poets, in regard to religion and morals, differed in nothing essentially from those of the *οἱ πολλοί*; much as they prided themselves upon their superiority to that multitudinous class. Let us next take

a rapid glance of those opinions of the PHILOSOPHERS which are connected with our present inquiry, and ascertain whether St. Paul, who was well acquainted with the philosophical notions of his and all preceding times, was not justified in saying to the Colossians, " Beware, lest any man make a prey of you through an empty and deceitful philosophy."

Now that this branch of our inquiry may not be loaded with any superfluous matter, I do not hesitate to admit that some of the ancient philosophers had very sublime conceptions respecting the nature and a few of the attributes of God, some of them descanted nobly on virtue in general, and some indulged in exalted speculations relative to the immortality of the soul. I have no wish to " charge the picture of their aberrations and defects with deeper shades than justly belong to it." Yet, I must say, there was a strange confusion and diversity of sentiments among them respecting the Deity; and that a complete system of morality was not to be found in the writings of any one philosopher, nor of all of them collectively. Some of them excluded a divine mind and intelligence from the formation of the universe: few, if any of them, acknowledged God in a proper sense to be the Creator of the world: most of them encouraged polytheism. Some taught that God is the soul of the world: some, that the world is God: some, that the world is eternal both in matter and form: some, that the stars are to be worshiped: the greatest and best of them spoke of a plurality of gods, whom they recommended to the adoration of the people. They justified the worship of images: they apologised even for the Egyptian animal worship: they added metaphysical deities to the popular ones: they referred the people for instruction to the priests and the oracles; and gave it as a general rule, that all men should conform to the religion of their country, that is, to polytheism. The best of them, amidst all their arguments, often spoke *doubtfully* of a future state, and none of them applied the

doctrine of a future state to its proper ends and uses: they affirmed, that a short and temporary happiness is as good as an eternal one; and few of them believed a future punishment. In regard to morals, they were generally wrong in that part which relates to purity and continence, and the government of the sensual passions. Many of them, as Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Æschines, Cebes, &c. were chargeable with unnatural lusts and vices, which they reckoned among things of an indifferent nature[8]. They generally allowed of fornication, as having nothing in it sinful, or contrary to reason. Many of them pleaded for suicide, as lawful and proper in some cases; and most of them thought lying lawful when it was profitable. Thus, Plato says, "he may lie who knows how to do it, *εν δέοντι καίρῳ*, in a fitting or needful season." In his fifth Republic he lays it down as a maxim, that it is "necessary for rulers to make use of frequent lying and deceit, for the benefit of their subjects, *σύχνῳ τῷ ψένδει καὶ ἀπάτῃ χρῆσθαι*. In his third and fourth books De Republica, he advises governors to make use of lies both towards enemies and citizens, when it is convenient. In his second book De Republica, he allows lying in words on some occasions; but not lying in the soul, so as to believe a falsehood. And in this he was followed by the Stoics, who held that a wise man might make use of a lie many ways, *ἄνευ συγκαταθέσεως*, without giving assent to it; as in war, in prospect of some advantage, and for many other conveniences and managements of life, *κατ' ἄλλας οἰκονομίας τῦ βίυ πόλλας*. Consistently with this, Maximus Tyrius says, "there is nothing venerable, ὐδὲν σεμνὸν, in truth, if it be not profitable to him that hears it." He adds, that "a lie is often profitable or advantageous to men, and truth hurtful." Thus it appears how apt they were to mistake in judging of

[8] Incestus omnigenus, adulterium, et etiam ἀρσενομιξία, veterum nonnullis, sapientiæ nomine claris, inter ἀδιάφορα, habebantur. Canon. Chronic. Secul. ix. p. 172.

what is truly venerable, decorous, and laudable, which yet they made one of the principal characteristics of the τό καλον or *honestum*. Plato mentions it as an old saying, and one which he approves, that that which is profitable is καλον, honourable, and that which is hurtful is base. Since, therefore, both he and others of the philosophers, held that a lie is, in many cases, profitable, they must hold that a lie is often καλον, *honestum*. Some of the philosophers, again, as Laertius tells us of Theodorus, declared without disguise, that "a wise man might, upon a fit occasion, commit theft, adultery, and sacrilege; for that none of those things are base in their own nature, if that opinion concerning them be taken away, which was agreed upon for the sake of restraining fools[9]." Besides all this, they were, as Diodorus Siculus testifies, continually innovating in the most considerable doctrines, and, by perpetually contradicting one another, made their disciples dubious; so that their minds were kept in such continual suspense during their whole lives, that they could not firmly believe any thing.

From this induction of particulars you may perceive that, with regard to men of learning and strong intellect among the heathens, reason, so far as it related to God and religion, and human happiness, was asleep: if some happy hints at any time awoke it, and set it moving in a right direction, yet, without the guidance of revelation, it was ever ready to wander and go astray. As this, however, is a very interesting topic, you will, perhaps, expect that I should specify some of the erroneous notions taught by the most celebrated philosophers. I will, therefore, select a few instances for your information.

SOCRATES, you will, I doubt not, recollect[10] was the first among the Greeks who made morals the proper and only subject of his philosophy, and brought it into common life. Yet he represents the worshiping not

[9] Diog. Laert. lib. ii. segm. 99.
[10] Tuscul. Disput. lib. v. cap. 4.

of one God, but of *the gods*, as the first and most universal law of nature; he was in the habit of consulting the oracle to know the will of the gods; and every one knows that his dying injunction was, "CRITO, *we owe a cock to Æsculapius:* discharge this debt for me, and *pray do not neglect it.*" He sometimes, it is true, gives a noble account of future happiness; but seems to confine it principally, as several of the modern deists do, to those who had made a great progress in philosophy. "The soul," says he, "which gives itself up to the study of wisdom and philosophy, and lives abstracted from the body, goes at death to that which is like itself—divine, immortal, wise—to which, when it arrives, it shall be happy, freed from error, ignorance, fears, disorderly loves, and other human evils; and lives, as is said of the initiated, the rest of its life with the gods." This philosopher, however, debased his doctrine of a future state with that of the *transmigration of souls,* and gives a mean idea of the happiness reserved for the common sort of good and virtuous men after death: "They go," he says, "into the bodies of animals of a mild and social kind, such as bees, ants, &c. But none is admitted to the fellowship of the gods, but a lover of *knowledge.*" What an admirable incitement is this to the practice of virtue, that the soul of a virtuous man of moderate intellect may be indulged with the privilege of animating the bodies of bees and ants! It must be farther remarked, that most of the arguments produced by Socrates, in the Phædo, for the immortality of the soul, were weak and inconclusive; and, accordingly, although he expressed a *hope* of it in his last discourse, when he was near death, yet he by no means spoke confidently. He concludes his long discussion relative to the state of souls after death, by saying, "That these things are so as I have represented them, it does not become any man of understanding to affirm." In his apology to his judges, he comforts himself with the consideration, that "there is much ground to *hope* that death is good:

for it must necessarily be one of these two; either the dead man is nothing, and has not a sense of any thing; or it is only a change or migration of the soul hence to another place, according to what we are *told.* If there is no sense left, and *death is like a profound sleep, and quiet rest without dreams, it is* WONDERFUL TO THINK WHAT GAIN IT IS TO DIE; but if the things which are told us are true, that death is a migration to another place, this is still a much greater good." And soon after, having said, "that those who live there are both in other respects happier than we, and also in this that for the rest of their existence they are immortal;" he again reiterates, "*If the things which are told us are true.*" You cannot fail to notice, that in all this the awful idea of accountability does not enter; and, farther, that, instead of the philosopher's adopting the language of sublime or steady confidence on this momentous occasion, he deals only in puerility and uncertainty. Let but his hesitating language be contrasted with the Christian assurance of an Apostle in analogous circumstances and you cannot help drawing the most cogent inferences. The language of the dying philosopher is, "*If* the things which are told us are *true.*" But listen to the language of the Apostolic conqueror, and rejoice that his confidence in the face of death may be yours. "I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is *laid up for me a crown of righteousness: which the Lord, the righteous Judge,* SHALL *give me at that day:* and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." "I KNOW in whom I have believed; and am PERSUADED that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day,"

You will not be surprised, after all this, to learn that Socrates recommended divination; was, as Tertullian remarks, condemned at Athens, amongst other things, for sodomy and the corrupting of youth; and was

addicted to incontinence and *fornication*[11]. But it is time for us to direct our attention to his great disciple, PLATO. I have already adverted to the encouragement this philosopher gave to the habit of lying. He farther prescribes a community of wives in his commonwealth, and lays down laws for the express purpose of destroying all parental and filial affection; he gives great liberties to incontinency, affirming, "that all things respecting women, marriage, and the propagation of the species, should be entirely common among friends;" allows, and in some cases prescribes, the exposing and destroying children, namely, the children of mothers older than forty years, or of fathers older than fifty-five[12]; allows of drunkenness at the feast of Bacchus, though not at other times; and prescribes the worship of the *stars*, which, indeed, are the divinities he principally recommends to the people. He seems sometimes to have believed in one Supreme God, but never thought it safe or proper to proclaim him to the vulgar; on the contrary he directed them to follow the Delphian oracle, as the best guide in matters of religion. He held two principles of things, God and matter; but, according to him, the first and highest God was not concerned in the creation, nor in the government of the world. Like his master, Socrates, he often asserts the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Sometimes he argues for the immortality of the soul, on the ground of its pre-existence. Sometimes he recommends the doctrine of future punishments as a most ancient and sacred tradition; yet at other times he expresses himself in a manner that seems not to admit of punishments in a future state; and finds fault with such representations as tend to alarm the people, and make them afraid of death. "All those direful and terrible names (says he) respecting the ghosts of

[11] Tertul. Apol. c. 46.

[12] Plato, De Republica, lib. v. The mere English reader may see proofs of all these positions in Taylor's Plato, vol. i. pp. 265, 298, 299, 300, &c.

the dead are to be regretted, which cause such as hear them to shudder and tremble." And in his Cratylus he introduces Socrates as blaming those who represent Hades as a dark and gloomy abode, and derive the word from τὸ ἀειδὲς, as if it were void of light; but is rather for deriving it ἀπὸ τῦ πάντα τὰ κάλα ειδέναι, from knowing all things good and beautiful. Here he manifestly excludes every thing from the notion of a future state that might be apt to create terror, and thus leaves no room for future misery.

Aristotle, that great master of reasoning and of criticism, whose power was such as to establish a mental despotism which prevailed universally for thousands of years, was childish enough in matters of religion to affirm most positively, that though there was one eternal first mover, yet the stars are also true eternal deities[13]. He likewise denies that providence extends its care to things below the moon; approves, nay prescribes, the exposing and destroying sickly children; encourages revenge, and speaks of meekness as seeming to err by defect, "because the meek man is not apt to revenge himself, but rather to forgive." He varies in his doctrine with regard to future existence, and sometimes absolutely denies it, as in chapter 9, book iii. of the Nicomachian Ethics, where he asserts that, "death is the most dreadful of all dreadful things, for that it is the end of our existence: to him that is dead there seems nothing farther to remain, whether good or evil[14]."

Having dwelt thus long upon the Greek philosophers, I cannot dilate much upon the sentiments of those who wrote in the Latin language. I shall, however, select Cicero as a very fair specimen of those who flourished before the Christian era. Now this great man, it is well known, would not allow that God created the matter out of which the universe was made;

[13] Arist. Metaphys. lib. xiv. cap. 8.

[14] Παντων των φοβερων φοβερώτατον δὲ ὁ θάνατος. Ethic. ad Nicomach. lib. iii. cap. 9, and lib. iv. cap. 11.

and besides this, he commonly expressed himself after the manner of the polytheists. In arguing for the existence of God, he leads the people to a plurality of deities; and he asserts expressly that the *Dii majorum gentium*, those that were accounted gods of the higher order, were taken from among men. Indeed, he very much approves the custom of paying divine honours to famous men, and regarding them as gods[15]. He argues excellently for the immortality of the soul in several parts of his works; yet sometimes, in his letters to his friends, represents death as putting an end to all sense of good or evil. Thus, in an epistle to L. Mescinius, he says, "Death ought to be despised or even wished for, because it will be void of all sense." "Propterea quod nullum sensum esset habitura." And again, in an epistle to Torquatus, he comforts himself with this thought: "Whilst I shall exist, I shall not be troubled at any thing, since I have no fault with which to charge myself; and if I shall not exist, I shall be deprived of all sense." "Nec enim dum ero, angar ulla re, cum omni caream culpâ; *et si non ero, sensu omni carebo.*" He makes no use, at any time, of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul for moral purposes, either for supporting men under their troubles, or for stimulating them to the practice of virtue; and the notion of future punishments is absolutely rejected and derided by him. In his notorious oration for Aulus Cluentius, he speaks of the punishments of the wicked as *silly fables*, and adds, "if these things are false, as all men understand them to be, what has death taken from him" (that is, from Oppianicus, a man whom Cicero himself represents as a monster of wickedness, guilty of the most atrocious murders, &c.) "but *a sense of pain.*" After perusing this you will not be surprised at being told, that Cicero often commends and justifies suicide; and warmly pleads for fornication, as having nothing blameable in it, and as a thing universally allowed and practised.

[15] De Natura Deorum, lib. ii. cap. 24.

I might next proceed to speak of PLINY, who openly argues against a future state[16]; of PLUTARCH, who treats the fear of future punishment as vain and childish, and wrote his book of Isis and Osiris as an apology for the pagan polytheism; of CATO of Utica, who has been held up "as a perfect model of virtue," but who lent his wife to Hortensius, was an habitual drunkard[17], and taught and practised self-murder; and of SENECA, who pleads for suicide, justifies Cato's drunkenness, asserts that no man in his reason fears the gods, and contemns future punishments as vain terrors invented by the poets; but a detailed account of their sentiments and opinions would, in all the main points, be so strictly similar to what I have related of the other wise men of antiquity, that I omit it rather than render this letter tautologous and tiresome[18].

Before I terminate the present discussion, however, I cannot avoid remarking that several of the heathen philosophers, instead of being puffed up with vain ideas of the powers of their own understanding, when directed to religious and moral inquiries (as most modern Deists are), frequently acknowledged their own impotency and blindness. Thus Tully exclaims, "Utinam tam facilè vera invenire possim, quàm falsa convin-

[16] Hist. Nat. lib. vii. cap. 55.

[17] Seneca, De Tranquillitate Animi, cap. ult.

[18] For a very masterly view of the opinions of the Greek and Roman heathens, for the first four centuries after the Christian era; a most able sketch of their mythological and moral notions, their cruelty and profligacy, as opposed to the everlasting promises of the Gospel, and the meekness and purity of its primitive followers, the reader may consult Dr. Ireland's Lectures, or, "Paganism and Christianity compared."

Tertullian, in his Apol. cap. 46, terminates a fine contrast between the sentiments and conduct of the philosophers and of the early Christians by asking—"Where now is the similitude between a philosopher and a Christian?—between a disciple of Greece, and of heaven?—a trader in fame, and a saver of souls?—between a man of words, and a man of deeds?—a builder of virtue, and a destroyer of it?—a dresser up of lies, and a restorer of truth?—between a plunderer, and a guardian of this sacred deposit?" See also Lactantius, lib. 2, *de Origine Erroris*, § 3, on the character of Cicero.

cere!" "O, that I could discover *truth* with the same ease that I can detect *error!*" and, in another place, aware of the little that human creatures can do of themselves, he says expressly, "Nemo vir magnus, sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit." "No man was ever truly great without some *divine influence.*" And Plato, (whether from the recollection of the traditions and truths he gathered from the Jews while he was in Egypt, or whether 'twas

"the Divinity that *stirr'd* within him;"

I pretend not to determine), concludes[19], that we cannot know of *ourselves* what petition will be pleasing to God, or what worship to pay him; but that it is necessary a lawgiver should be sent from heaven to instruct us; and such a one he did expect: and "O," says he, "how greatly do I desire to see that man, and who he is!" Nay, he goes farther, and affirms[20] that this lawgiver must be *more than man:* for, since every nature is governed by another nature that is superior to it, as birds and beasts by man, he infers that this lawgiver, who was *to teach man what man could not know by his own nature,* must be of a nature superior to man, that is, of a divine nature. But farther still, as Rousseau remarked, in his celebrated letter to the archbishop of Paris, "when Plato described his imaginary good man, loaded with all the shame of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ; the resemblance was so striking that all the fathers perceived it." He gives, indeed, as lively a picture of the person, qualifications, life and death, of this divine man, as if he had been acquainted with the 53d chapter of Isaiah: for he says[21] "that this just person must be poor, and void of all recommendations but that of virtue alone; that a wicked world would not bear his instructions and reproof; and therefore within *three or four years* after he began to preach,

19 Alcibiad. ii. de Precat. 20 De Legibus, lib. 4.
21 De Republica, l. ii.

he should be persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, and at last put to death."

I have now, my dear Friend, presented you with a summary of the most striking opinions of the ancient Legislators, Poets, and Philosophers, with regard to Superior Beings, to human conduct, and a future state; if it be asked what is the tendency of the sentiments of any one philosopher, or of the aggregate of them, to elevate the conceptions in respect of Deity, to purify the affections, to humanize the heart, to amend the conduct; the reply is lamentably obvious—*nothing*. What principle in theology, or what rule in morals, has any one of them, or have all of them, indubitably established? How many of the doctrines of what is now called *Natural* Religion did any of them hold? The four great propositions which the moderns almost universally concede to Natural Religion, as integral parts of it, are, "1st. That there is one God. 2dly. That God is not constituted of those things which we see. 3dly. That God takes care of all things below, and governs all the world. 4thly. That he alone is the great Creator of all things out of himself." Now they are incontrovertible facts, which cannot be too deeply engraven upon the mind, that none of the greatest and wisest men among the Greeks and Romans held *all* these propositions, and that very few held *any* of them firmly; that before the Christian era no people in the world believed these propositions but the Jews; and that they did not *discover* them, but received them by divine Revelation, in the substance of the first four precepts of the decalogue. Let also the idolizers of the powers of reason in the development of religious truths have it equally impressed upon their minds, that none of the heathen philosophers attempted a solution of the question, "How shall a sinner appear before the God whose laws he has broken?" and that none of them made even a remote approximation to that simple, comprehensive, and admirable rule of moral conduct, "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you;"

and then, I trust they will be constrained to acknowledge that the Apostle of the Gentiles was not indulging a flight of enthusiasm, but was simply impelled by the force of truth, when he penned the triumphant exclamation—"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe[22]!"

I remain, dear Sir, yours truly.

P. S. You will, perhaps, be surprised that I have not in this letter taken any notice of *Zoroaster*, of whom many Deists have so much to tell. I have omitted all recital of his supposed opinions for two reasons: 1st, Dr. Hyde has shown, in his treatise De Religione veterum Persarum, that Zoroaster had been a disciple of one of the Jewish prophets: and 2dly, all the writings that are ascribed to this philosopher are *unquestionably spurious.*

LETTER IV.

On the Probability that there should be Mysteries in a Revealed Religion.

YOUR deistical friends, my dear sir, seem determined to contend zealously for every inch of ground before they yield it. But this is not to be regretted; for our future progress will be facilitated in proportion to the number of obstacles that are completely removed at the outset of our inquiry. When they tell you they will believe nothing that they cannot comprehend, and that the Scriptures are unworthy of credit, because they abound in mysteries, they adopt the language of unbelievers in all ages. But these declarations prove that they have never correctly investigated the power and office of reason in matters of religion, and at the

[22] 1 Corinthians, i. 20, 21.

same time run counter to their whole course of conduct in relation to all except religious subjects; for who is there that does not believe numerous facts which are utterly incomprehensible; and reduce principles into practice, which are beyond, though not repugnant to, reason?

It is, indeed, in a neglect of the essential distinction between what is above reason and what is contrary to it, that the objection now under consideration is founded. Yet surely nothing can be more obvious than that many things, beyond the scope of our intellectual powers, may nevertheless be perfectly true. When we were children, several matters were to us entirely incomprehensible, which have now sunk into the simplest, and lowest, and plainest elements of our knowledge. We were then learners; docility became us; and we were highly reprehensible if we opposed our puny understandings to that of our tutors. Now, in the bestowal of a revelation, the principle is assumed that men are in a state of pupilage. The God of infinite wisdom condescends to be their teacher; and it therefore behoves them, on such an occasion, to employ their reason solely for the purpose of ascertaining whether what is presented to them be really the word of God, and then to resign their understandings wholly to the adoption of the truths with which they are favoured. This is consistent with what is prescribed by that great philosopher Lord Bacon, who directs that reason be employed in studying "Holy mysteries, with this caution, that the mind for its module be dilated to the amplitude of the mysteries; and not the mysteries be straitened and girt into the narrow compass of the mind." He says again, in his Advancement of Learning, "We ought not to attempt to draw down or submit the mysteries of God to our reason; but, on the contrary, to raise and advance our reason to the divine truth. In this part of knowledge, touching divine philosophy, I am so far from noting any deficiency, that I rather note an excess whereto I have digressed, be-

cause of the extreme prejudice which both religion and philosophy have received, from being *commixed together*, as that which will undoubtedly make an heretical religion and a fabulous philosophy." And again, "As to seek Divinity in Philosophy, is as if you would seek the living amongst the dead; so, on the other hand, to seek Philosophy in Divinity, is all one as to seek the dead amongst the living." Lastly, that I may not tire you with quotations, "The prerogative of God comprehends the whole man. Whereby, as we are to *obey God's law*, though we find a reluctance in our *will;* so we are to *believe his word*, though we find a reluctance in our *reason;* for, if we believe only that which is *agreeable unto our reason*, we give assent to the *matter*, not to the *author*, which is no more than we would do towards a discredited witness."

Mighty as is the authority of Lord Bacon, I do not shelter myself under it for the purpose of avoiding the discussion; but merely in order to show that this great father of the inductive philosophy saw, not only the propriety, but the advantage, of subjecting his gigantic intellect to divine instruction. Nor was this the consequence of affected humility, but of real knowledge of the actual situation of man. He that is shut up in a close place, and can only peep through crevices,—or who stands in a valley, and has his prospect intercepted,—or who is encompassed with fogs that render all surrounding objects obscure, would be overwhelmed with contempt if he set at nought the superior information of those who had beheld the same things from an eminence, and through a translucent atmosphere: yet such is the folly of him who will not adopt what extends beyond his previous knowledge. Beneath omniscience there are innumerable forms of intelligence, in the lowest of which man seems to be placed, but one step above "the beasts that perish:" hence his mind has a pitch beyond which it cannot soar without extraneous aid; and things clearly intelligible to more noble creatures, moving in a higher sphere, may be dark and

inexplicable to him; and shall he despise and deny the truth of verities revealed to him by the Fountain of all Intelligence, because he cannot comprehend them? Is it not an established axiom, that "that which may be comprehended is less than the hands that grasp it; that which may be valued is less than the senses which rate it[1]?" Why, then, should this axiom be annulled, and any thing be rejected as untrue, because it cannot be reduced within the narrow dimensions of human intellect?

It is certain that *infinity* is not a word void of sense, but a word that expresses something which really exists. Whichever way man turns, immensity presents itself. In vain will he seek a duration which is the term of all duration, a space which shall be the ultimate limit of space: after having wearied itself in its excursions, the mind will find itself limited, but in a new point of duration, a fresh portion of space. Nor can the ideas of duration and of space be annihilated. We may imagine that all motion ceases, that all heat is extinct, that attractions and repulsions are at an end, that all living beings have perished, that all nature is dissolved, and matter no longer exists; but if it were proposed to go on and imagine that the place which these things occupied had itself disappeared, the mind would stop short and withhold its assent. In like manner, we may suppose the sun no longer to shine, the stars no longer to pursue their real or apparent revolutions, that universal lethargy and the profoundest night prevails through all nature. On this hypothesis, it is evident that days and hours would not be known, and time would lose its measure: yet *duration* would retain its being.

It is obvious, therefore, that neither space nor duration yields its existence to any supposition which the imagination of man, fertile and powerful as it is, can create. They exist, they continue to exist, in all their immense capacity; for to imagine them limited is to conceive the commencement of their non-existence;

[1] Tertul. Apol. 17.

and it follows indubitably that neither space nor duration can have bounds.

Infinitude then exists, and it is impossible for man to sound its depths: for while it is easy to convince ourselves of its existence, it is far otherwise to conceive adequately in what it consists. We may rise to the idea of infinity, but we cannot penetrate it. It is not merely in the contemplation of the infinitely *great* that the intellect fails; it is equally confounded when attempting to investigate the infinitely *little*.

Man is posited between these two limits, in a sphere which comprehends things *finite*, and even these evade his ken in a thousand directions. Truth, therefore, is not restricted to the point occupied by man. It soars above him; it lies beyond him; it sinks beneath him; yet it reveals to him so much of its nature, as to reward his industry, to stimulate and gratify his well-directed modest scrutiny: let him but bear in mind incessantly that the finite cannot comprehend the infinite, and he will learn more than by any other process—since he will be prepared to admit that in a world of mystery a Religion without mystery *must be an illusion*.

I shall not, however, rest satisfied with this general mode of argumentation; but since the subject is one in which mistakes are very prevalent, shall descend into particulars, and demonstrate that those who withhold their assent from any of the propositions of Revealed Religion because they are incomprehensible, act upon a principle which, if they adopted it in other matters, would lead them to the most unbounded and incurable scepticism. This will be effected if I can show that, in Natural Religion, in many branches of Natural Philosophy, and in several parts of pure and mixed mathematics, there are numerous incontrovertible propositions, which are, notwithstanding, incomprehensible.

Many things are now classed under the irrefragable truths of Natural Religion, which are still far beyond our utmost comprehension. Such are God's necessary existence, his production of things from nothing, his

ever giving without having ever received, his always sustaining others without being himself sustained by any thing *ab extra*, his ever acting but never changing, his prescience without necessity of events, his immensity without extension, his eternity without succession, his existing before all ages, and yet never being younger or older, his being in heaven, and yet "about our bed and about our path:" all of which are evidently out of our mental grasp, because finite minds cannot measure infinite subjects, and because the Supreme Being has not seen fit to communicate to us in our present state the faculty of knowing all things that are intelligible. Take God's eternity for example. Suppose a person is disposed to cavil at this great truth, he may ask, "What maxim is less controvertible than this, that nothing can take place without cause?" and again, "What can be more staggering to reason, than that a being should exist without a beginning, without a cause?" If it were replied, that God is the cause of his own existence, it would be only such a multiplication of words as would render the subject still more obscure: for the objector might say, "If you mean this explanation to remove the difficulty, it must imply these palpable and impious absurdities; that the Supreme Being once did not exist, and yet, before he existed, operated to produce his own existence." Here there are great and acknowledged difficulties: yet, commence your reasoning in another direction, and you establish the disputed position, notwithstanding. Deduce from your own existence, and that of the universe, the necessity of the existence of a Creator; and you will soon perceive that the argument is direct, and that it necessarily leads you to conclude that a Being *must* have existed for ever, without beginning, and without cause; because, if something have not existed from eternity, the things which now are must have arisen from nothing, and without any producing cause. Yet observe, and this is the point to which I would particularly draw your attention, that, though this train of argumentation firmly establishes the truth in question, it does not

remove or diminish one of the difficulties with which it was originally surrounded. You see that it is an irrefragable truth; but you are still incapable of comprehending, much less of elucidating, the mode of the fact. It is obvious, however, and it was for this the example was adduced, that what our reason is incapable of comprehending, and what one train of argument may induce us to reject, another process of reasoning may establish as an indisputable and necessary truth, even while the original difficulties remain undiminished and untouched.

Thus, with regard to the being of God, the general inference is of this kind.—There is, avowedly, something perfectly incomprehensible to us in the attributes of Deity, when contemplated in relation to *time*; there is also something utterly incomprehensible when we contemplate them in reference to *space*; there may, then, be something as incomprehensible when we refer them to other metaphysical modes. Why, for example, may they not be as incomprehensible, when contemplated in reference to *number?* And why should any matter of revelation be rejected on this latter ground, when mysteriousness on the two former accounts does not lead to any such rejection?

Let us now pass from the truths of Natural Religion to the topics of Natural Philosophy, where you will find, or where indeed you *know*, and only require to be reminded of it, that almost all our knowledge of the universe, its laws, and its phenomena, is but a collection and classification of circumstances of fact, with the consequences resulting from them; some of which lie nearer, and others more remote from view. We may ascertain relations and dependencies, and can often predict what will occur in particular connexions; but we know next to nothing of things in themselves, nor can we penetrate into their real, and sometimes not even into their proximate, causes.

Philosophers and chemists have made very extraordinary discoveries respecting the various subjects of their researches, have in many cases determined the

laws of their operation, and can frequently predict with perfect confidence what phenomena will occur under certain circumstances. They have demonstrated, for example, that the planetary motions are so regulated, that the squares of the times, in which the planets revolve about the focal luminary, are always proportional to the cubes of their mean distances from that body—that electric and magnetic attractions are inversely as the squares of the distances;—that, within certain limits, the expansive force of gaseous substances is as the force of compression to which they are subjected;—that, at certain determinate temperatures, many solids become liquid, and liquids are transformed into aeriform fluids, &c.: and these points are so incontrovertibly established, that no man of competent understanding can possibly refuse his assent to them, though this conviction *must* be yielded previously to his receiving any satisfactory information as to the real nature of the things to which these propositions relate. For, suppose a student were obstinately to suspend his assent till he received satisfactory answers to the following string of queries, it would inevitably follow, that he must remain perpetually ignorant of almost every useful truth in these sciences. What is the cause of the attraction of gravitation, of cohesion, of electricity, of magnetism, or the cause of congelation, of thawing? How are the constituent gases of the atmosphere intermingled? What is caloric? From what does the essential distinction between solids and liquids, and between liquids and aeriform fluids, arise? Nay, what is the dust which I tread under my feet? What is the impenetrability by which its corpuscles resist, the mobility by which it is capable of changing its place, the attraction by which it draws and is drawn, the affinity by reason of which it is ready to combine with some substances, and not with others? In reply to these, and a hundred such inquiries, the querist probably will receive an explication, if any be attempted, in which, as the adage expresses it, "the load is shifted

from the back of the elephant to that of the camel," or one series of facts is substituted for another; and thus, so far as real explanation goes, he obtains nothing but words in current payment. Suppose, for example, with regard to *evaporation*, he asks, "How is water taken up and retained in the atmosphere?"—it cannot be in the state of vapour, it is said, because the pressure is too great: there must therefore be a true chemical solution. But when we consider that the surface of water is subject to a pressure equal to that of thirty inches of mercury, and that, besides this pressure, there is a sensible affinity between the particles of water themselves; how does the insensible affinity of the atmosphere for water overcome both these powers? How does vapour, which ascends with an elastic force of only half an inch of mercury, detach itself from water, when it has the weight of thirty inches of mercury to oppose its ascent? Difficulties occur to nearly the same extent to all theories of the solution of water in air; and it is therefore of consequence for every one, let him adopt what opinion he may, to remove them. Chemical solution, to which we are often referred, but very ill explains it; and, indeed, the best chemical philosophers acknowledge that they have not, as yet, any theory of evaporation which is even plausible; evaporation is then, at present, *incomprehensible;* yet no well-informed man attempts to deny that evaporation is perpetually taking place.

Suppose the querist makes a transition from common to *animal* chemistry, and wishes to trace its operations in the nervous system, or its connection with vital power: no less a philosopher than Professor Berzelius shall reply to his inquiries. "With all the knowledge we possess of the forms of the body, considered as an instrument, and of the mixture and mutual bearings of the rudiments to one another, yet the cause of most of the phenomena within the animal body lies so deeply hidden from our view, that it certainly never will be found. We call this hidden cause *vital power;* and

like many others who before us have in vain directed their deluded attention to this point, we make use of a *word* to which we can affix no idea. This *power to live* belongs not to the constituent parts of our bodies, nor does it belong to them as an instrument, neither is it a simple power; but the result of the mutual operation of the instruments on one another—a result which varies as the operations vary, and which often, from small changes and obstructions, ceases altogether. When our elementary books inform us, that the vital power in one place produces from the blood the fibres of the muscle; in another a bone; in a third a medulla of the brain; and, in another again, certain humours which are destined to be carried off; we know after this explanation as little as we knew before. This unknown cause of the phenomena of life is principally lodged in a certain part of the animal body; viz. in the nervous system, the very operation of which it constitutes. The brain and the nerves determine altogether the chemical processes within the body; and although it cannot be denied that the exercise of their functions tends to produce chemical effects; yet we are constrained to confess, that the chemical operations therein are so far beyond our reach, that they entirely escape all our observations. Our deepest chemical researches, and the finest discoveries of later times, give us no information on this subject. Nothing of what chemistry has taught us hitherto has the smallest analogy to the operations of the nervous system, or affords us the least hint toward a knowledge of its occult nature: and the chain of our experience must *always* end in something inconceivable. Unfortunately, this *inconceivable something* acts the principal part in animal chemistry, and enters so into every process, even the most minute, that the highest knowledge which we can attain is the knowledge of the nature of the productions, whilst we are for ever excluded from the possibility of explaining how they are produced[z]."

I hope I shall not diminish the effect of these valuable

[z] Brunmark's translation of Dr. Berzelius's View of the Progress and present State of Animal Chemistry.

remarks, by dwelling for a few minutes upon considerations which they in fact suggest.

With regard to the formation, the development, and growth of the human body, for example, our knowledge extends scarcely at all beyond the grossest facts. I know that the same bread which serves for my nourishment would serve also for that of my dog. But how is it that in the two cases it conduces to such altogether different transformations? Still more, how is it that the nourishment which, up to a certain period, gives continued augmentation and energy to the frame, then ceases to produce a similar effect: from that epoch the body begins to lose its energy; it declines daily, and at length ceases to exist. What then, is the principle of organization which produces, as it is developed, effects so different; that spring which acts incessantly, which yet is preparing for death the very day that life commences?

Then, again, that mean state between life and death, that state which brings to a pause all the exterior motions of the body, and interrupts or modifies for a season several of the interior motions, leaving in action only those that refer to the respiration, the circulation, the digestion; that sleep which is so apt an image of death "that no good man trusts it without his prayers," and which is, notwithstanding, the source of new life and energy; is that to be referred to the same principle; if not, whence comes it? What is it?

Farther, with respect to the nourishment which preserves life, does it feed only the principle upon which depend our involuntary motions, or does it contribute to those which may be modified, suspended, stopped, under the direction of the will?

Life is continued and manifested in us by the combination of two sorts of motion. Respiration, circulation, digestion, are involuntary and continued, and constitute (if I may employ such a phrase solely by way of distinction) the *vegetative life*. Walking, running, crying out, laying hold of, pushing forward, &c. are actions, evidently of a second class, and mark

the *animal life.* The two classes are altogether distinct; may we, then, affirm, or may we not, that they emanate from the same principle, and derive their nourishment in the same way?

Observations by which we may thus trace the probability of distinct causes, where men have usually been satisfied with one, still leave us in doubt as to the specific nature of those causes; and indeed open a vast and unexplored field of research. For, it would not suffice, in tracing the source of life, to assign a single principle, and show how that principle acts separately; the investigator must rise successively to the primitive cause of vegetative life and the principle of animal life; and, with regard to man, his researches will be palpably incomplete, if he do not also trace the origin of intellectual life, and of the moral life; and show whether they are essentially different, or one and the same.

Then, how does human volition occasion the motion of parts of the human body, or of a separate body, living or dead? How does mind operate upon nerves and muscles? How do nerves and muscles operate upon mind? Or, how is it that at the moment of volition I stretch out *my* arm, or rise from my seat; while no volition of mine will cause another man to stretch out *his* arm, or rise from his seat, unless his will concur with mine. Still farther, how is it that I cannot cause a heavy weight to move at my volition, without recurring to some mechanical process? I will the motion of a stone, it moves not: I will the motion of my arms, or my legs, or my eyes, they instantly obey. Why has my mind this power over the matter of my body, and not over other matter? I may be told, because there is an intimate connection between the substance which thinks, and the material substance in which it dwells. Be it so. Then what is that connection? Since it is certain that an immaterial substance cannot have with body the least point of contact; that thought cannot by communication become body, nor body become thought. Hence, then, an adequate

cause of all the varieties of phenomena to which I have here adverted is as inscrutable, as deeply hidden among the mysteries, as the most recondite subject connected with religion.

Let me next proceed to a branch of knowledge in which opinions and theories are not daily fluctuating, as are those in chemistry; I mean the mixed mathematical science of MECHANICS. This science is conversant about *force, matter, time, motion, space.* Each of these has been the cause of the most elaborate disquisitions, and of the most violent disputes. Let it be asked, what is *force?* If the answerer be candid, his reply will be, "I cannot tell, so as to satisfy every inquirer, or so as to enter into the essence of the thing." Again, what is *matter?* "I cannot tell." What is *time?* "I cannot tell." What is *motion?* "I cannot tell." What is *space?* "I cannot tell." Here, then, is a science, the professed object of which is to determine the mutual relations, dependencies, and changes of quantities, with the real nature of all of which we are unacquainted; and in which the professed object is, notwithstanding, effected. We have certain knowledge respecting subjects of which in themselves we have no knowledge: demonstrated, irrefragable propositions, respecting the *relations* of things, which in themselves elude the most acute investigations. The reason of this I shall attempt to assign by and by. But before I proceed farther, I must request that you will acquit me of any intention to depreciate the sciences: on the contrary, they furnish me with daily delight; I know their value, have laboured long and actively in diffusing a knowledge of them, and am in some measure, I hope, able to appreciate their utility. I know also that in the physical sciences, and especially that to which our attention is now directed, very much has been accomplished. Yet I may challenge the wisest philosopher to demonstrate, from unexceptionable principles, and by just argument, what will be the effect of one particle of matter in motion meeting with another at rest, on the supposition that these

two particles constituted all the *matter* in the universe. The fact of the communication of motion from one body to another is as inexplicable as the communication of divine influences. How, then, can the former be admitted with any face, while the latter is denied solely on the ground of its incomprehensibility? We know nothing of *force* any more than we do of *grace*, except by its effects. There are questions, doubts, perplexities, disputes, diversities of opinions, about the one as well as about the other. Ought we not, therefore, by a parity of reason, to conclude, that there may be several true and highly useful propositions about the latter as well as about the former? Nay, I will venture to go farther, and affirm, that the preponderance of argument is in favour of the propositions of the theologian. For while force, time, motion, &c. are avowedly constituent parts of a demonstrable science, and ought, therefore, to be presented in a full blaze of light, the obscure parts proposed for our assent in the Scriptures are *avowedly* mysterious. They are not exhibited to be perfectly understood, but to be believed. They *cannot* be explained, without ceasing to be what they are: for the explanation of a mystery is, as Dr. Young long ago remarked, its destruction. They cannot be rendered obvious without being made mean: for a clear idea is only another name for a *little* idea. Obscurities, however, are felt as incumbrances to any system of philosophy: while mysteries are ornaments of the Christian system, and tests of the humility and faith of its votaries. Mysteries are not absurdities; but truths seen in disunited portions. The intermediate parts, may for wise purposes, in some cases, indeed, of necessity, be concealed from men; yet the perfection, harmony, and certainty of the whole may be unquestionable. So that, if the rejectors of incomprehensibilities acted consistently with their own principles, they should rather throw aside all philosophical theories in which obscurities are found, and exist as *defects*, than the system of Revealed Religion, in which

they enter as essential parts of "that *mystery* of godliness" in which the Apostles gloried[3].

But perhaps I may be told that although things which are incomprehensible occur in our physical and mixed inquiries, they have no place in "*pure* mathematics, where all is not only demonstrable, but intelligible." This, again, is an assertion which I cannot admit; and for the denial of which I shall beg leave to produce my reasons, as this will, I apprehend, make still more in favour of my general argument. Now, here it is known geometricians can *demonstrate* that there are curves which approach continually to some fixed right line, without the possibility of ever meeting it. Such, for example, are hyperbolas, which continually approach towards their asymptotes, but cannot possibly meet them, unless an assignable finite space can become equal to nothing. Such, again, are conchoids, which continually approach to their directrices, yet can never meet them, unless a certain point can be both beyond and in contact with a given line at the same moment. Mathematicians can also demonstrate that a space *infinite* in one sense may, by its rotation,

[3] It has been asserted by a writer in the Monthly Review, in reply to all this, that to talk of "mysteries in *revealed* religion," is to frame a contradiction in terms. But this writer affects precision in language, without a corresponding precision in his ideas. It seems never to have entered into his mind, that a fact, either past, present, or to come, might be made known to us by express Revelation, which should nevertheless remain mysterious; the limits of our faculties, or perhaps the imperfection of language, rendering it inexpedient, or impossible, that it should be *explained*. Revelation may furnish us with clear evidence of the present existence of a truth, or the future occurrence of an event, though the thing itself may still remain incomprehensible *to us*. We have a striking example of this kind in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. xv. where he says, "Behold, I show you *a mystery*: we shall not all sleep; but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Here he *revealed a mystery*: he *revealed* it, because it was till then unknown; it is notwithstanding *a mystery*, for there is not a syllable that explains to us how it will be effected.

generate a solid of *finite capacity;* as is the case with the solid formed by the rotation of a logarithmic curve of infinite length upon its axis, or that formed by the rotation of an Apollonian hyperbola upon its asymptote. They can also show in numerous instances that a variable space shall be continually augmenting, and yet never become equal to a certain finite quantity: and they frequently make transformations with great facility and theoretical elegance, by means of expressions to which no definite ideas can be attached. Can we, for example, obtain any clear comprehension, or indeed any notion at all, of the value of a power whose exponent is an *acknowledged* imaginary quantity, as $x^{\sqrt{-1}}$? Can we, in like manner, obtain any distinct idea of a series constituted of an *infinite* number of terms? In each case the answer, I am convinced, must be in the negative. Yet the science, in which these and numerous other *incomprehensibles* occur, is called *Mathesis*, THE DISCIPLINE, because of its incomparable superiority to other studies in evidence and certainty, and, therefore, its singular adaptation to discipline the mind. And this, notwithstanding these *mysteries*, (for are they not such?) is the science, says the eloquent and profound Dr. Barrow, "which effectually exercises, not vainly deludes, nor vexatiously torments, studious minds with obscure subtleties, perplexed difficulties, or contentious disquisitions; which overcomes without opposition, triumphs without pomp, compels without force, and rules absolutely without any loss of liberty; which does not privately overreach a weak faith, but openly assaults an armed reason, obtains a total victory, and puts on inevitable chains." How does it happen, now, that when the investigation is bent towards objects which cannot be comprehended, the mind arrives at that in which it acquiesces *as certainty*, and rests satisfied? It is not, manifestly, because we have a distinct perception of the *nature* of the objects of the inquiry (for that is precluded by the supposition, and, indeed, by the preceding statement); but because we *have* such a distinct perception of the

relation those objects bear one toward another, and can assign positively, without danger of error, the exact relation, as to identity or diversity, of the quantities before us, at every step of the process. Mathematics is not the science which enables us to ascertain the nature of things in themselves;—for that, alas! is not a science which can be learned in our present imperfect condition, where we see "through a glass darkly;"—but the science of quantity as measurable, that is, as *comparable:* and it is obvious, that we can compare quantities satisfactorily in some respects while we know nothing of them in others. Thus we can demonstrate, that any two sides of a plane triangle are, together, greater than the third, by showing that angles, of whose absolute magnitude we *know nothing*, are one greater than the other; and then inferring the truth of the proposition, from the previously demonstrated proposition, that the greater angle in a triangle is subtended by the greater side. So again, when we affirm that between any two consecutive terms of the natural series of whole numbers, there may be interposed an indefinite number of magnitudes which are not fractional, the reason at first revolts as if we proposed an absurdity; for it seems repugnant to the first principles of common sense that between 99 and 100, for example, it should be possible to interpose a multitude of numbers, none of which can be correctly represented by either 99 *plus* a fraction, or 100 *minus* a fraction. Yet, far from involving absurdity, the proposition is so strictly true, that we cannot refute it without rasing to its foundation all mathematical science. For, it is demonstrable that the square roots of 9802, 9803, 9804, 9805, &c. to 10000, are each, in succession, greater than the former, and the first of them greater than 99. In like manner we can prove that the cube roots of 860300, 860301, 860302, &c. to 1000000, are each in succession greater than the former; that the cube root of 860300, the smallest of them, while it exceeds 99, is lese than the square root of 9802. In like manner we can assign separate series of biquadrate and sursolid

roots still more numerous than the square and cube roots, all of which shall be demonstrably unequal to each other, shall be interposed in point of numerical value between 99 and 100, and yet shall, *none* of them, be correctly expressible either by the *sum* of 99 and a fraction, or by the *difference* of 100 and a fraction. Here, then, reason must bend, put on the "inevitable chains," and feel itself constrained, not merely to acknowledge the existence of those incommensurables which are neither fractional nor integral numbers, but also that while they are unsusceptible of precise appreciation, they admit of as accurate comparison as any other mathematical quantities. No mathematician can tell the precise value of $\sqrt{2}$ or $\sqrt{5}$; every one can tell the precise value of $\sqrt{4}$ or $\sqrt{9}$: no one, notwithstanding, will hesitate longer to declare that $\sqrt{5}$ exceeds $\sqrt{2}$, than to declare that $\sqrt{9}$ exceeds $\sqrt{4}$, that is, that 3 is greater than 2.

Once more, we cannot possibly *know*, ALL the terms of the infinite series

$$\frac{1}{a} - \frac{c}{a^2} + \frac{c^2}{a^3} - \frac{c^3}{a^4} + \frac{c^4}{a^5} -, \text{\&c. } in.\ infin.$$

because such knowledge implies a contradiction: neither can we know all the terms of the infinite series

$$\frac{1}{c} - \frac{a}{c^2} + \frac{a^2}{c^3} - \frac{a^3}{c^4} + \frac{a^4}{c^5} -, \text{\&c.}$$

yet we can show that these series are equal. For we can demonstrate that the first series is an expanded function, standing with the quantity $\frac{1}{a+c}$ in the relation of equality: we can likewise demonstrate, that the second series bears the relation of equality with the quantity $\frac{1}{c+a}$: and although we can have but a vague idea even of the quantities $\frac{1}{c+a}$ and $\frac{1}{a+c}$,

while *a* and *c* stand as general representatives of *any* quantities; yet those fractions must necessarily be equal, and thence we infer the like equality between the sums of the two infinite series. In a similar manner we can have no clear conception of the nature of the quantities $\sqrt{-a}$, $\sqrt{-b}$, &c.; yet we are as certain that $\sqrt{-a} = \sqrt{-b} \times \sqrt{\frac{a}{b}}$, as that $20 + 30 = 50$: since we can demonstrate that equality subsists in the former expression as completely as we can in the latter, both being referable to an intuitive truth. Every mathematician can demonstrate strictly that the conclusions he obtains by means of these quantities, though he cannot comprehend them in themselves, must *necessarily* be true: he therefore acts wisely when he uses them, since they facilitate his inquiries; and, knowing that their relations are *real*, he is satisfied, because it is only in those *relations* that he is interested.

To you, my friend, who are so conversant with mathematical subjects, this enumeration of particulars would be perfectly unnecessary, were it not in order to recommend that similar principles to those which I have here traced be adopted, when *religious* topics are under investigation. We cannot comprehend the nature of an infinite series, so far as that nature depends upon an acquaintance with each term; but we *know* the relation which subsists between it and the radix from which it is expanded: we cannot comprehend the nature of the impossible quantities $\sqrt{-a}$, $\sqrt{-b}$, &c.; but we *know* their relation to one another, and to other algebraic quantities. In like manner (though I should scarcely presume to state such a comparison, but for the important practical inference which it furnishes), we cannot, with our limited faculties, comprehend the infinite perfections of the Supreme Being, or reconcile his different attributes, so as to see distinctly how "mercy and peace are met together, righteousness and truth have embraced each other;" or how the

Majestic Governor of the universe can be every where present, yet not exclude other beings; but we know, or at least *may* know (if we do not despise and reject the information graciously vouchsafed to us by the God of truth), his relation to us, as *our* Father, *our* Guide, and *our* Judge.—We cannot comprehend the nature of the Messiah, as revealed to us in his twofold character of "the Son of God," and the "Man Christ Jesus;" but we know the relation in which he stands to us as the Mediator of the New Covenant, and as him "who was wounded for *our* transgressions, who was bruised for *our* iniquities, and by whose stripes we are healed:"—Again, we cannot comprehend, perhaps, why the introduction of moral evil should be permitted by him "who *hateth* iniquity;" but we know, in relation to ourselves, that he hath provided a way for *our* escape from the punishment due to sin (which way if we lose, the fault is entirely our own),—and therefore, though we cannot comprehend and explain it so as to silence all cavillers, yet we have abundant reason to "glory in the *mystery* of Reconciliation." By pursuing this current of reflection farther, and running over the general principles of other branches of mathematical, chemical, and metaphysical science, than I have here adverted to, you will still find, I am persuaded, that the result of the inquiry will come in aid of our religious belief, by showing that the difficulties attending Christianity are of the same kind, and probably should be referred to the same cause, the weakness of our faculties, as those which envelope all the fundamental principles of knowledge.

Philosophers, notwithstanding all these difficulties, recommend the cultivation and diffusion of the sciences, because of their tendency to sharpen the intellectual faculties of man, and to meliorate his condition in society. With how much greater reason and earnestness, then, should Christians recommend the dissemination and adoption of "pure and undefiled religion," considering its direct tendency to enlarge the understanding, and while it fills it with the contemplation of Deity, to purify and harmonize the passions, to refine

the moral sense, to qualify and strengthen for every function in life, to sustain under the pressure of affliction, to afford consolation in sickness, and enable us to triumph in death! What other science can make even a pretension to dethrone oppression, to abolish slavery, to exclude war, to extirpate fraud, to banish violence, to revive the withered blossoms of Paradise? Such are the pretensions and the blessings of Genuine Christianity; and wherever Genuine Christianity prevails, there are they experienced. Thus it accomplishes its promises on earth, where alone it has enemies; it will therefore accomplish them in Heaven, where its friends reign. Here, indeed, its advocate must be reduced to silence; for how shall he display the meaning of its *celestial* promises! how describe dignity so vast, or picture glory so brilliant! How shall language delineate what mind cannot imagine! and where is that mind, among puny and ephemeral creatures, that can penetrate the thick obscure, that can describe the light of Perfect Knowledge, that can feel the glow of Perfect Love, that can breathe the air of Perfect Happiness?

Let it not, however, be forgotten, that, though some of the truths revealed in Scripture are mysterious, and the "eternal weight of glory" it promises too vast for us to estimate; yet the tendency of the most exalted of its mysteries, and the most exquisite of its promises, is *practical*. If we cannot explain the influences of the Spirit, for example, happy will it be for us, nevertheless, if we *experience*, that "the *fruits of the Spirit* are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." If we cannot comprehend all we read in the Sacred Pages, let us, notwithstanding, submit, adore, and profit by them; recollecting, that "the sublimest truths, and the profoundest mysteries of religion, are as level, perhaps, to the capacities of the meanest as of the highest human intellect. By neither are they to be fully fathomed. *By both they may be easily* BELIEVED, *on the sure testimony of Divine Revelation.* As simple and important facts which connect time with eternity, and heaven

with earth, they belong equally to men of every order, and are directly calculated to produce those emotions of awe and reverence, of faith and hope, and reliance on the Divine presence, providence, justice, and benevolence, of which the consequences must be in the highest degree MORAL[4]."

"When I behold with mine eyes (says the profound and philosophic author of the Ecclesiastical Polity) some small and scarce discernible grain or seed, whereof nature maketh a promise that a tree shall come; and when afterwards of that tree, any skilful artificer undertaketh to frame some exquisite and curious work, I look for the event, I move no question about performance, either of the one or of the other. Shall I simply credit nature in things natural? Shall I, in things artificial, rely myself on art, never offering to make doubt? And in that which is above both art and nature refuse to believe the Author of both, except he acquaint me with his ways, and *lay the secret of his skill before me?* Where God himself doth speak those things, which either for height and sublimity of matter, or else for secrecy of performance, we are not able to reach unto, as we may be ignorant without danger, so it can be no disgrace to confess we are ignorant. Such as love piety will, as much as in them lieth, know all things that God *commandeth*, but especially the duties of service which they owe to God. As for his dark and hidden works, they prefer, as becometh them in such cases, simplicity of faith before that knowledge, which *curiously sifting what it should adore, and disputing too boldly of that which the wit of man cannot search, chilleth for the most part all warmth of zeal, and bringeth soundness of belief many times into great hazard*[5]."

It is right to add, in relation to this subject, that common and even illiterate Christians may often have clearer ideas of what are considered mysterious things, than the bolder and more inquisitive; because, as

[4] Edinburgh Review, vol. xvii. p. 269.

[5] Ecclesiastical Polity, book v. sect. 67.

Dr. Waterland remarks, "they are content to rest in *generals*, and to stop at what they understand, without darkening it afterwards by words without knowledge." The notion of eternity, for example, is clear enough to a plain Christian; while to a person who perplexes himself with nice and minute inquiries respecting succession, or past or interminable duration, that notion, which at first was clear, becomes obscure, by his blending perplexities with it. So again, in respect of omnipresence, the *general* notion is competently distinct; but when a man has been rambling in pursuit of curious inquiries relating to substantial and virtual presence, extension and non-extension, space and place, and so on, he will most probably bewilder himself, and lose sight of the general idea which alone was necessary to render the truth under contemplation of practical efficacy.

In fine, let me remark, that no man, however capacious his intellect, or extensive his acquirements, is justified in affirming that a proposition (especially a religious one) is *absolutely* repugnant to reason, because it is repugnant to *his* reason. If he do not deem himself infallible (and that is inconsistent with the hypothesis of his possessing a cultivated and enlarged mind) he must be conscious that his passions, his prejudices, his conduct, bias and distort his reasonings, and impel him to erroneous conclusions. If, then, he find only *one* or *two* men, equal to himself in mental power, adopting what he rejects; he is bound to hesitate and examine afresh. And if, not merely one or two, but the great majority of men of intellect, investigation, and unimpeached moral character, receive as consistent with sound reason what he has regarded as repugnant to it, he is required by all the laws of modesty, humility, good sense, and philosophy, either to accede to their general admission of the proposition, or to lament his own unfortunate insensibility to conviction, and remain silent.

Believe me, &c.

LETTER V.

On the Genuineness and Authenticity of the Scriptures.

HAVING endeavoured in my preceding letters to point out the absurdity of Deism—the necessity of Revelation, especially as manifested by the defectiveness of all the discoveries of the ancient philosophers in respect of morals and theology,—and to show that mysterious and incomprehensible things occur in every branch of knowledge; I shall now proceed to an examination of that collection of writings which the majority of Christians in all ages have considered as coming from God, and revered as constituting that system of Revealed Religion by which our conduct should be regulated, and on which should be founded our hopes and fears of "future bliss or future woe."

The Bible is not to be contemplated as one book, but as a collection of several, composed at different times by different persons, and in different places. It is a collection of writings, partly historical, partly prophetical, partly didactic, composed some previously, some subsequently, to an important event, adverted to in most of them, called "*the coming of the Messiah;*" an event which is generally described as having a remarkable tendency to enhance the glory of God and the happiness of man. Now, to believe the Christian Religion is to believe that Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, were what they are described to be in these books; that is, were endued with divine authority, that they had a commission from God to act and teach as they did, and that He will verify their declarations concerning future things, and among them those concerning a *future life*, by the event;—it is to receive the Scriptures as our rule of life, as the foundation of our hopes and fears. Such a belief, that it may be operative, must have a substantial basis: and so varied and persuasive are the evidences of Christianity,

that every man, whether his intellectual faculties are weak or strong, have been little or much cultivated, may obtain evidence suited to his circumstances. He who cannot enter into elaborate disquisitions concerning the credibility of the Scriptures, has other and often stronger grounds of faith. He may see the provision which the Bible makes for the restoration of man to happiness to be precisely such as his own necessities require: he may see that the purity of its commands has a wonderful tendency to elevate the nature of man, and to produce universal felicity; he may experience that actual change of heart and life which the Gospel promises to all sincere believers; and then as the Apostle expresses it, "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in *himself*[1]," a witness that may grow and triumph during the decay of the mental faculties, the anguish of a sick bed, and the agonies of death. But the evidence of which I now intend principally to speak, is that deducible from a more critical examination of the Bible itself, and from collateral testimony drawn from historic and other indisputable sources.

Now, any candid and reflecting person, when he first directs his attention to this wonderful volume, and notices the awful, characteristically authoritative, language which is often assumed in it, will be naturally impelled to inquire, Is this book what it professes to be, the Word of God? Were its various authors instructed by God to relate the histories, announce the doctrines, enforce the precepts, predict the events, which are the subjects of their respective books? Were they "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," or were they impostors? Or, to reduce these inquiries into a methodical form, it will be asked generally, Are the Books of the Old and New Testaments (excluding those which are avowedly apocryphal) *genuine?* Are they *authentic?* Are they *inspired?* Here nothing is asked that is tautologous, nothing that is superfluous. For a book may be genuine

[1] 1 John, v. 10.

that is not authentic; a book may be authentic that is not genuine; and many are both genuine and authentic that are not inspired. The History of Sir Charles Grandison, for example, is genuine, being indeed written by Richardson, the author whose name it bears; but it is not authentic, being a mere effort of that writer's invention in the production of fictions. The Account of Lord Anson's Voyages, again, is an authentic book, the information being supplied by Lord Anson himself to the author; but it is not genuine, for the real author was Benjamin Robins, the mathematician, and not Walters, whose name is appended to it. Hayley's Memoirs of the Life of Cowper are both genuine and authentic; they were written by Mr. Hayley, and the information they contain was deduced from the best authority. The same may be said of many other works, which, notwithstanding, lay no claims to the character of being inspired. These three characteristics of genuineness, authenticity, and inspiration, meet no where but in the books which constitute the Old and New Testaments. In order to establish this position, I shall now attend to the qualities of genuineness and authenticity, which will furnish ample employment for the present letter; and shall consider that of inspiration in a subsequent part of the series.

Here I shall first present you with three general propositions on the genuineness of Scripture, taken principally from an ingenious philosopher of the last century[2]; and then subjoin some such particular considerations as must, I think, in conjunction with those propositions, remove all doubt from every candid mind.

1. *The Genuineness of the Scriptures proves the Truth of the principal Facts contained in them.*

For, First, it is very rare to meet with any genuine writings, professing to be real history, in which the principal facts are not true; unless where both the motives which engaged the author to falsify, and the circumstances which gave some plausibility to the fiction,

[2] Hartley on Man, vol. ii.

are apparent; neither of which can be alleged in the present case, with any colour of reason. Where the writer of a history appears to the world as such, not only his moral sense, but his regard to his character and his interest, are strong motives not to falsify in notorious matters; he must, therefore, have stronger motives from the opposite quarter, and also a favourable conjuncture of circumstances, before he can attempt this.

Secondly. As this is rare in general, so it is much more rare where the writer treats of things which happened in his own time, and under his own cognizance or direction, and communicates his history to persons under the same circumstances. All which may be said of the writers of the Scripture History.

That this and the following arguments may be applied with more ease and perspicuity, I shall here, in one view, refer the books of the Old and New Testaments to their proper authors. It is assumed then, that the PENTATEUCH consists of the writings of *Moses*, put together by *Samuel*, with a very few additions; that the books of JOSHUA and JUDGES were, in like manner, collected by him; and the book of RUTH, with the first part of the first book of SAMUEL, written by him; that the latter part of the first book of SAMUEL, and the second book, were written by the prophets who succeeded *Samuel*, probably *Nathan* and *Gad*; that the books of KINGS and CHRONICLES are extracts from the records of the succeeding prophets concerning their own times, and from the public genealogical tables, made by *Ezra*; that the books of EZRA and NEHEMIAH are collections of like records, some written by *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, and some by their predecessors; that the book of ESTHER was written by some eminent Jew, in or near the times of the transactions there recorded, perhaps *Mordecai*, though some conjecture it was *Ezra*; the book of JOB by a Jew, probably by *Moses*; the PSALMS by *David*, *Asaph*, *Moses*, and other pious persons; the books of PROVERBS and CANTICLES by *Solomon*; the book of ECCLESIASTES by *Solomon*, towards the close of

his life, when distress and anguish had reclaimed him from idolatry; the PROPHECIES by the prophets whose names they bear[3]; and the books of the NEW TESTAMENT by the persons to whom they are usually ascribed. There are many internal evidences, and, in the case of the New Testament, many external ones too (which will be touched upon as we proceed), by which these books may be shown to belong to the authors here specified. Or, if there be any doubts, they are merely of a critical nature, and do not at all affect the *authenticity* of the books, nor materially alter the application of the arguments in favour of this proposition. Thus, if the Epistle to the HEBREWS be supposed to have been written not by St. Paul, but by Clement, or Barnabas, or Luke, the evidence therein given to the miracles performed by Christ and his followers, will not be at all invalidated by this circumstance.

Thirdly. The great importance of the facts mentioned in the Scriptures makes it still more improbable that the several authors should either have attempted to falsify, or have succeeded in such an attempt. This, indeed, is an argument for the truth of the facts, which proves the genuineness of the books at the same time. The truth of the facts, however, is inferred more directly from their importance, if the genuineness of the Scriptures be previously allowed. The same thing may be observed of the great number of particular circumstances of time, persons, &c. mentioned in the Scriptures, and of the harmony of the books with themselves, and with each other. These are arguments both for the genuineness of the books, and the truth of the facts distinctly considered, and also arguments for deducing the truth from the genuineness. And indeed the arguments for the general truth of the history of any age or

[3] For the doubts expressed by sound biblical critics respecting the last *six* chapters of the prophecies ascribed to *Zechariah*, and the reasons on the whole for concluding that they were composed by *Jeremiah*, see Newcome's Improved Version of the Minor Prophets, pp. 303—305 of the Pontefract edition.

nation, where regular records have been kept, are so interwoven together, and support each other in such a variety of ways, that it is extremely difficult to keep the ideas of them distinct, so as not to anticipate, and not to prove, more than the exactness of logical method requires one to prove. Or, in other words, the inconsistencies of the contrary supposition are so great, that they can scarcely stand long enough to be confuted. You may easily try this upon the history of England or France, Rome or Greece.

Fourthly. If the books of the Old and New Testaments were written by the persons to whom they are ascribed above; *i. e.* if they be genuine, the moral characters of these writers afford the strongest assurance that the facts asserted by them are true. Falsehoods and frauds of a *common* nature shock the moral sense of common men, and are rarely met with except in persons of abandoned characters: how inconsistent, then, must those of the most glaring and impious nature be with the highest moral characters! That such characters are due to the sacred writers appears from the writings themselves, by internal evidence; but there is also strong *external* evidence in many cases; and indeed this point is allowed in general by unbelievers. The sufferings which several of the writers underwent both in life and death, in attestation of *the facts* delivered by them, is a particular argument in favour of those facts.

Fifthly. The arguments here alleged for proving the truth of the Scripture History from the genuineness of the books, are as conclusive in respect of the miraculous facts, as of the common ones. But besides this, it may be observed, that if we allow the genuineness of the books to be sufficient evidence of the common facts mentioned in them, the miraculous facts must be allowed also, from their close connexion with the common ones. It is necessary to admit both or neither. It is not, for instance, to be conceived, that Moses should have delivered the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, or conducted them through the wilderness for forty

years, at all, in such manner as the common history represents, unless we suppose the miraculous facts intermixed with it to be true also. In like manner, the fame of Christ's miracles, the multitudes which followed him, the adherence of his disciples, the jealousy and hatred of the chief priests, scribes, and pharisees, with many other facts of a common nature, are impossible to be accounted for, unless we allow that he did really work miracles. And similar observations apply in general to the other parts of the Scripture History.

Sixthly. There is even a particular argument in favour of the miraculous part of the Scripture History, to be drawn from the reluctance of mankind to receive miraculous facts. It is true that this reluctance is greater in some ages and nations than in others, and probable reasons may be assigned why this reluctance was, in general, less in ancient times than in the present (which, however are presumptions that some *real* miracles were then wrought); but it must always be considerable, from the very frame of the human mind, and would be particularly so amongst the Jews at the time of Christ's appearance, as they had then (according to their own account) been without miracles for at least four hundred years. Now this reluctance must make both the writers and readers very much upon their guard; and if it be now one of the chief prejudices against revealed religion, as unbelievers unanimously assert, it is but reasonable to allow also, that it would be a strong check upon the publication of a miraculous history at or near the time when the miracles were said to be performed; *i. e.* it will be a strong confirmation of such a history, if its genuineness be granted previously.

And, upon the whole, we may conclude certainly, that the principal facts, both common and miraculous, mentioned in the Scriptures, must be true, if their genuineness be allowed. But the particular evidences of miraculous facts, as well as the principal objections which have been urged against them, will be stated more fully in a future letter.

The converse of this proposition is also true, namely, *if the principal facts mentioned in the Scriptures be true, they must be genuine writings.* This converse proposition is much more important than it may appear at first sight; for there are many evidences for the truth of particular facts mentioned in the Scriptures; such, for example, as those taken from natural history, from geography, and the contemporary profane history, which no way presuppose, but, on the contrary, *prove,* the genuineness of the Scriptures; and this genuineness, thus proved, may, by the arguments alleged under this proposition, be extended to infer the authenticity of the rest of the facts. Nor is this to argue in a circle, and to prove the truth of the Scripture history from its truth; but to prove the truth of those facts which are not attested by natural or civil history, from those which are, through the medium of the genuineness of the Scriptures.

II. *The Language, Style and Manner of Writing, used in the Books of the Old and New Testaments, are Arguments of their Genuineness.*

Here let it be observed, First, that the Hebrew language, in which the Old Testament was written, being the language of an ancient people, and one that had little intercourse with their neighbours, and whose neighbours also spake a language that had great affinity with their own, would not change so rapidly as modern languages have done, since nations have been variously mixed with one another, and commerce, arts, and sciences, greatly extended. Yet some changes there necessarily must be in about one thousand and fifty-four years elapsing between the time of Moses and that of Malachi. And accordingly critical Hebrew scholars assure us, that the Biblical Hebrew corresponds to this criterion with so much exactness, that a considerable argument may thence be deduced in favour of the genuineness of the books of the Old Testament.

Secondly. The books of the Old Testament have too considerable a diversity of style to be the work either of one Jew (for a *Jew* he must be, on account of the

language), or of any set of contemporary Jews. If, therefore, they be all forgeries, there must be a *succession* of impostors in different ages, who have concurred to impose upon posterity; which is inconceivable. To suppose part forged, and part genuine, is very harsh and unnatural; neither would this supposition, if admitted, be satisfactory.

Thirdly. The Hebrew language ceased to be spoken, as a living language, soon after the time of the Babylonish captivity; but it would be difficult or impossible to forge any thing in it after it was become a dead language. For learned men affirm positively, that there was no *grammar* made for the Hebrew till many ages afterwards; and, as it is difficult to write in a dead language with exactness, even by the help of a grammar, so it seems impossible without it. All the books of the Old Testament must therefore be, at least, *nearly* as ancient as the Babylonish captivity; and since they could not *all* be written in the same age (for the reason just assigned), some must be considerably more ancient: which would bring us again to a *succession* of conspiring impostors.

Fourthly. This last remark may perhaps afford a new argument for the genuineness of the book of Daniel, if any were wanting. But indeed the SEPTUAGINT translation, executed about two hundred and eighty-seven years before the Christian era, shows not only this, but all the other books of the Old Testament, to have been considered as ancient and genuine books soon after the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, at least.

Fifthly. There is a simplicity of style, and an unaffected manner of writing, in all the books of the Old Testament (excepting only those parts that are avowedly poetical or prophetical) which is a very strong evidence of their genuineness, even exclusively of the suitableness of this circumstance to the times of the supposed authors.

Sixthly. The style of the *New* Testament also is remarkably simple and unaffected, and perfectly suited

to the time, places, and persons. There is a diversity of style and idiom, such as infallibly proves them to be the production of different writers. And, though a large proportion of the language of the New Testament is pure Greek; yet it is not like the language of Isocrates, of Demosthenes, of Xenophon, or of Plutarch: then there would have been strong ground to suspect forgery, since such would ill accord with the character of Jews writing in a language not their own. But the use of words and phrases is such, as well as the ideas and method of reasoning, that the books of the New Testament could be written by none but persons originally *Jews*, which brings the inquiry into a still narrower compass: for I believe it would be impossible to devise any hypothesis which would satisfactorily account for *Jews* telling such a story, and sacrificing their lives in attestation of it, unless the death and resurrection of Christ make an essential part of that hypothesis.

It may also be observed, that the narrations and precepts of both the Old and New Testaments are delivered without marks of hesitation; the writers teach as having authority; a circumstance peculiar to those who have both a clear knowledge of what they deliver, and a perfect integrity of heart; and this uprightness of intention is, farther, most strikingly evinced by their incessantly relating, either as historians, prophets, or teachers, what runs counter to the whole train of their prejudices as Jews.

And farther, that the care used in specifying that some of the Psalms were composed by Asaph, others by Moses, some of the Proverbs by Lemuel, &c. furnishes another argument in favour of the genuineness of the books of Scripture, and leads us to infer that those books are the real productions of the authors to whom they are ascribed.

III. *The very great Number of particular Circumstances of Time and Place, Persons, &c. mentioned in the Scriptures, strengthen the Proof both of their Genuineness and Authenticity.*

Here I shall adduce some of the principal heads under which these circumstances may be found. Thus, there are mentioned in the book of GENESIS the rivers of Paradise, the generations of the antediluvian patriarchs, the deluge with its circumstances, the place where the ark rested, the building of the tower of Babel, the confusion of tongues, the dispersion of mankind, or the *division* of the earth among the posterity of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the generations of the postdiluvian patriarchs, with the gradual shortening of human life after the flood; the sojournings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with many particulars of the state of Canaan, and the neighbouring countries in their times; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the state of the land of Edom both before and after Esau's time, and the descent of Jacob into Egypt; with the state of Egypt before the time of Moses.

In the book of EXODUS are mentioned the plagues of Egypt, the institution of the passover, the passage through the Red Sea, with the destruction of Pharaoh and his host there, the miracle of manna, the murmurings of the people, the victory over the Amalekites, the solemn delivery of the *law* from Mount Sinai, many particular laws both moral and ceremonial, the worship of the golden calf, the circumstance of Moses breaking the tables on which the law had been inscribed, and a very minute description of the tabernacle, priests, garments, urim and thummim, ark, &c.

In LEVITICUS there is a collection of ceremonial laws, with all their particularities, and accounts of the consecration of Aaron and his son, and of the remarkable deaths of Nadab and Abihu.

The book of NUMBERS contains the first and second numberings of the several tribes, with their genealogies; the peculiar offices of the three several families of the Levites, many ceremonial laws, the journeyings and encampments of the people in the wilderness during forty years, with the relation of some remarkable events

which happened in this period; such as the searching of the land, the rebellion of Korah, the victories over Arad, Sihon, and Og, with the division of the kingdoms of the two last among the Gadites, Reubenites, and Manassites; the history of Balak and Balaam, and the victory over the Midianites; all described with the several particularities of time, place, and persons.

The book of DEUTERONOMY contains a recapitulation of many things contained in the last three books, with a second delivery of the *law*, chiefly the moral one, by Moses, upon the borders of Canaan, just before his death, with an account of that death, and the true reason assigned why he saw, but did not enter, the promised land.

In the book of JOSHUA are related, the passage over Jordan, the conquest of the land of Canaan in detail, and the division of it among the tribes; including a minute geographical description.

The book of JUDGES contains a recital of a great variety of public transactions, with the private origin of some. In all, the names of times, places, and persons, both among the Israelites and the neighbouring nations, are noted with particularity and simplicity.

In the book of RUTH is a very particular account of the genealogy of David, with several incidental circumstances.

The books of SAMUEL, KINGS, CHRONICLES, EZRA, and NEHEMIAH, contain the transactions of the kings before the captivity, and of the governors afterwards, all delivered in the same circumstantial manner. And here the particular account of the regulations, sacred and civil, established by David, and of the building of the temple by Solomon, the genealogies given in the beginning of the first book of *Chronicles*, and the lists of the persons who returned, sealed, &c. after the captivity, in the books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, deserve particular notice, in the light in which we are now considering things.

The book of ESTHER contains a like account of a very remarkable event, with *the institution of a festival in memory of it.*

The book of PSALMS mentions *many* historical events both common and miraculous, in an incidental way, or sometimes by way of celebration[4]; and this, as well as the books of JOB, PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, and CANTICLES, allude to the manners and customs of ancient times, in various particulars.

In the PROPHECIES there are blended some historical relations; and in other parts the indirect mention of facts, times, places, and persons, is interwoven with the predictions in the most copious and circumstantial manner.

If we turn to the NEW TESTAMENT, the same observations present themselves at first view. Here also there are often comprehensive syllabuses of the leading facts of the Old Testament history, comprised in a single chapter, of which those mentioned at the foot of the page are striking instances[5]. It is also observable, that our Lord, in his various conversations with the Jews, assumes the genuineness and authenticity of the Jewish Scriptures, that is, of the Old Testament books, and argues upon them. Thus we find him speaking of Moses as a lawgiver, referring to the decalogue, and various laws and observances mentioned in different parts of the Pentateuch; to Abram, to Jacob, to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, to the Queen of Sheba (mentioned in 1 Kings x.), and Solomon; to David as a prophet, and as *inspired;* to "Moses and the Prophets" generally; to Jonah, as a type of himself; and to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, and Malachi, as prophets. In the several parts of the New Testament, too, we have the names of friends and enemies, the conduct of both, the faults of

[4] See especially Psalms 78, 105, 106, 114, 135, 136. And for a defence of the *Canticles*, see Theodoret's Commentary thereon; or Dupin's Bibliotheca Patrum, vol. iv. p. 62.

[5] Acts, vii.; 1 Cor. x.; Heb. xi.; 2 Pet. ii.

friends told without gloss, those of enemies without exaggeration or virulence; the names of Jews, Greeks, and Romans, obscure and illustrious; the times, places, and circumstances, of facts specified directly, and alluded to indirectly, with various references to the customs and manners of those times and places. And here again we may notice, by the by, that many of the historical books, both of the Old and New Testament, contain *prophecies* which have been fulfilled; and from which both their truth and their divine authority may be inferred; as I shall show in my next letter.

Now, from the preceding enumeration it may be observed, First, that in fact we never find forged or false accounts of things to superabound thus in particularities. There is always *some* truth where considerable particularities are related, and they always seem to bear some proportion to one another. Thus there is a great want of the particulars of time, place, and persons, in Manetho's account of the Egyptian dynasties, Ctesias's account of the Assyrian kings, and those which the technical chronologers have given of the ancient kingdoms of Greece; and agreeably to this obvious principle, these accounts have much fiction and falsehood, with some truth. Whereas Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian War, and Cæsar's of the War in Gaul, in both which the particulars of time, place, and persons are mentioned, are universally esteemed authentic to a great degree of exactness.

Secondly. A forger, or a relator of known falsehoods, would be careful not to mention so great a number of particulars, since this would be to put into his reader's hands criteria by which he may be detected. Hence appears one reason of the fact mentioned in the last paragraph, and which, in confirming that fact, confirms the proposition here to be established.

Thirdly. A forger or relater of falsehoods, could scarcely furnish such lists of particulars. It is easy to conceive how faithful records, kept from time to time, by persons concerned in the transactions, should con-

tain such lists; nay, it is natural to expect them in this case, from that local memory which takes strong possession of the fancy in those who have been present at transactions: but it would be a work of the highest invention, and greatest stretch of genius, to raise from nothing such numberless particularities, as are almost every where to be met with in the scriptures.

There is, besides, a circumstance relating to the Gospels, which deserves particular notice in this place. *St. Matthew* and *St. John* were apostles; and therefore, since they accompanied Christ, must have this local memory of his journeyings and miracles. *St. Mark* was a Jew of Judea, and a friend of *St. Peter;* and therefore may either have had this local memory himself, or have written chiefly from St. Peter, who had. But *St. Luke,* being a proselyte of Antioch, not converted, perhaps, till several years after Christ's resurrection, and receiving his accounts from different eye-witnesses, as he says himself, could have no regard to that order of time which a local memory would suggest. Let us try now how the gospels answer to these positions. Matthew's, then, appears to be in exact order of time, and to be a regulator to Mark's and Luke's, showing Mark's to be nearly so, but Luke's to have little or no regard to the order of time in his account of Christ's ministry. John's gospel is like Matthew's, in order of time; but as he wrote after all the other evangelists, and with a view only of recording some remarkable particulars, such as Christ's actions before he left Judea to go to preach in Galilee, his disputes with the Jews of Jerusalem, and his discourses to the apostles at his last supper, there was less opportunity for this evangelist's local memory to show itself. Yet his recording what passed before Christ's going into Galilee might be *in part* from this cause; as Matthew's omission of it was probably from his want of this local memory. For it appears that Matthew resided in Galilee, and that he was not converted till some time after Christ's going thither to preach. Now this suitable-

ness of the four gospels to their reputed authors, in a circumstance of so subtle and recluse a nature, is quite inconsistent with the supposition of fiction or forgery. This remark is due originally to Sir Isaac Newton[6].

Fourthly. If we could suppose the persons who forged the books of the Old and New Testaments to have furnished their readers with a great variety of particulars mentioned above, notwithstanding the two reasons here alleged against it, we cannot, however, conceive, but that the persons of those times, when the books were published, must, by the help of these criteria, have detected and exposed the forgeries or falsehoods. For these criteria are so attested by allowed facts, as at this time, and in these remote parts of the world, to establish the authenticity and genuineness of the Scriptures; and, by parity of reason, they would suffice even now to detect the fraud, were there any: whence we may conclude, *à fortiori*, that they must have enabled the persons who were upon the spot when the books were thus circulated to do this; and the importance of many of the particulars recorded, many of the renunciations required, would furnish them with abundant motives for this purpose. So that upon the whole it may be safely inferred, that the very great number of particulars of time, place, persons, &c. mentioned in the Scriptures, is a proof of their genuineness and truth; even independently of the consideration of the agreement of these particulars with history, natural and civil, and the agreement of the several books with themselves and with one another.

Were I to rest the proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures solely upon what has been already advanced in this letter, I might safely challenge the most learned men to adduce evidence of any thing like equal weight in proof of the genuineness of Cæsar's Commentaries, Pliny's Letters, Livy's Roman History, Tacitus's Annals, or any other pieces

[6] See his chapter on the birth and passion of Christ in his Comment on Daniel.

preserved to us from antiquity, and received without hesitation by all men of sound mind. But I am unwilling to quit a subject so copious and important without going still farther than this, and bringing forward other evidence in favour of particular portions of the Bible, from which their antiquity and genuineness will be placed in the most incontrovertible light. Here though, that our inquiry may be circumscribed within moderate limits, I must make selections; and shall for the most part speak of those books the authority of which has been most disputed by unbelievers.

Let us, then, for a first example, inquire into particular proofs of the authenticity of the PENTATEUCH. And here the evidences are numerous, various, and striking: I shall select the most prominent. *First*, ancient heathen writers testify to Moses and his writings in some way or other. Thus Manetho, Cheremon, Apollonius, Lysimachus, and many others, testify that Moses was the leader of the Jews, and the writer of their *Law*. Eupolemus, Artapanus, Strabo, Trogus Pompeius, Chalcidius, and Juvenal speak of Moses as the author of a volume which was preserved with great care among the Jews, by which the worship of images and eating of swine's flesh were forbidden, circumcision and the observation of the Sabbath strictly enjoined[7]. Longinus cites Moses as the Lawgiver of the Jews, and a person of no inconsiderable character: and adds, that he has given a noble specimen of the true sublime in his account of the creation of the world, when *light* was called into existence[8]. Diodorus Siculus, in his Catalogue of those lawgivers who affected to have received the plan of their laws from some deity, mentions *Moses* as ascribing his to that God whom he calls *Jaoh*, or *Jah*. And farther he speaks of Moses as a man illustrious for his courage and prudence, who instituted the Jewish religion and laws, divided the Jews into twelve tribes, established the priesthood

[7] It will be sufficient to refer to Juv. Sat. xiv. ver. 96—106.

[8] Long. De Sublim. § 9, p. 50. Pearce's 8vo. ed. 1732.

among them with a judicial power[9], &c. Numenius, a Pythagorean, held the Jewish Scriptures, and especially the books of Moses, in such great esteem, that his books of the chief good, &c. are full of passages quoted with great reverence from Moses and some of the prophets. He says, "*Plato* was only *Moses* speaking *Greek*," and affirms that Moses, by his prayers, brought dreadful calamities upon Egypt[10]. Justin Martyr enumerates many poets, historians, lawgivers, and philosophers of Greece, who mention Moses as the leader and prince of the Jewish nation[11]. Berosus and Abydenus mention the deluge. Artapanus, Eupolemus, and Abydenus speak of the tower of Babel; and the latter of the failure of that enterprise. Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Tacitus, Pliny, and Solinus agree in giving an account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the main agreeable to that of Moses[12]. Berosus, Alexander Polyhistor, and others, make express and honourable mention of Abraham, and some of his family; and even speak of his interview with Melchisedec.

Secondly. The genuineness and authenticity of the books of Moses may be inferred from their being mentioned in other books of Scripture. Thus, in the book of Joshua, in both the books of Kings, in the second book of Chronicles, in the books of Ezra, of Daniel, of Malachi, the writing of the Law is unequivocally ascribed to Moses. The divine mission of Moses is attested in the first book of Chronicles, in the Psalms, the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Several of the miraculous facts recorded in these books suggest to the Prophets their finest images[13]. Each of the five books of Moses

9 Diod. Sic. ap. Phot. Bib.

10 Euseb. Præp. Ev. ix. 8; xi. 10. Orig. Contra Cels. lib. iv.

11 Just. Cohort. ad Gent. p. 9—11. It may be added, that Porphyry, one of the most acute and learned enemies of Christianity, admitted the genuineness of the Pentateuch; and contended for the truth of Sanchoniathan's account of the Jews, from its coincidence with the Mosaic history. Celsus also admitted it.

12 Tacit. Hist. l. v. c. vii. Plin. Nat. Hist. Solinus. c. xxxvi.

13 Vide Eden, Ezek. xxviii. 13. The Deluge, Is. xxiv. 18. So-

is referred to, or separately quoted by Christ himself in the Gospels. And, after his resurrection, his Apostles add their testimony, not only to the fact that the *law* was written by Moses, but that it was written by inspiration[14].

Thirdly. The fact is affirmed in the books themselves. Thus, in Exodus, "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord; and took the book of the Covenant, and read it in the audience of the people." And again, in the book of Deuteronomy, part of which appears, as Bp. Watson observes, to be a kind of repetition or abridgment of the four preceding books.—"When Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, Moses commanded the Levites which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying—Take this book of the Law, and put it into the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee[15]." In conformity with this it was testified, full eight hundred years after, in the 2d book of Kings, and the 2d book of Chronicles: "Hilkiah said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the *book of the Law* in the house of the Lord." "Hilkiah the priest found *a book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses*[16].

Fourthly. Moses in these books gives a detailed account of various miracles openly wrought by himself, and of several miraculous interpositions of God in testimony of his divine mission: practices and ceremonies among the Jews were founded upon those miraculous events. The books of Moses also contain prophecies, as that which declares "that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," the prophecies of the dying patriarch Jacob, and that of a prophet "like unto

dom and Gomorrah, Is. xxxiv. 9. The Exodus, Is. xi. 15, 16; xliii. 16—19; li. 9, 10. Descent on Sinai, Micah, i. 3, 4. Acts, iii. 22, vii. 35—37; xiii. 39; xxvi. 22; xxviii. 23. Rom. x. 5. 1 Cor. x. 2. 2 Cor. iii. 7—15. Heb. iii. 2; vii. 14; x. 28. Rev. xv. 3, &c.

[14] See note [13]. [15] Ex. xxiv. 4. 7. Deut. xxxi. 24—26.

[16] 2 Kings, xxii. 8. 2 Chr. xxxiv. 14.

Moses." Now the existence of the customs and ceremonies proves the actual occurrence of the miraculous facts, and these establish the fidelity of the writings, and the divine authority under which Moses acted. So likewise the accomplishment of the prophecies proves that they were dictated by God. Had not the miracles taken place, it would be absurd to imagine the books could ever have been received, or the practices we advert to introduced. But the arguments suggested under this head will be enlarged upon in subsequent letters. I now proceed to remark with regard to the books of Moses:

Lastly. That their reception among the Jews proves that they were written by Moses, and that what he affirms respecting the divine dictation of greater part of them is true. PAUL says, "Even unto this day, *when Moses is read*, the veil is upon their heart[17]," that is, the Jews are ignorant of the true spiritual meaning of the Mosaic writings. Whence it is evident that, in his time, these writings were read regularly among the Jews, and had long been so. Again, JOSEPHUS, in his book against Apion, says, "We (the Jews) have two-and-twenty books which are to be believed as of divine authority, and which comprehend the history of all ages: *five* belong to Moses, which contain the origin of man, and the tradition of the succession of generations down to his death; which takes in a compass of about three thousand years." MAIMONIDES also, in the eleventh century, drew up a confession of faith for the Jews, which all of them at this day admit. Two of its articles relate to Moses: they are, 1. "The doctrine and prophecy of Moses is true." 2. "The law that we have was given by Moses." The Jews, then, from the time of Josephus down to the present, have ascribed the Pentateuch to

[17] 2 Cor. iii. 15. Spinoza's objections to the books of Moses, as well as his assertion that they were *not* written by Moses but by *Ezra*, or essentially altered by him, are very completely refuted, and shown to involve the most monstrous absurdities, by Abbadie in his "Vindication of the Truth of the Christian Religion."

Moses. Assume the hypothesis that these five books were forged *any* time between Moses and Josephus, and mark the great absurdity thereby produced; you must, in consequence, believe that at some one period the whole Jewish nation suffered themselves to be deluded, to adopt burdensome rites in remembrance of events which *they* knew never occurred, and to receive, as the law which was ever after to regulate their conduct, rules contrived by a vile pretender, who endeavoured to palm them upon them as laws emanating from the Supreme Being himself. This is in itself so extremely preposterous and improbable, that I might safely have rested the authority of the Pentateuch upon the present argument alone, were it not that as this portion of the Bible has been more exposed than any other to infidel attacks, I thought it right to show that, fortified as it is on all points, it may fairly be reckoned impregnable[18].

[18] Another very strong argument in favour of the authenticity of the Pentateuch is derived from the variety of minute allusions, and indirect coincidences, between the book of Deuteronomy and the preceding books: coincidences such as would never have been found in *forged* compositions. This argument has been established upon numerous instances selected by the late Dean Graves, of Trinity College, Dublin, in his valuable "Lectures on the Pentateuch." The *genuineness* of one of the books, Exodus, may also be inferred from the short and modest account of eighty years of Moses's life, preceding his Divine Mission, comprised in *twenty-two* verses. Many collateral proofs establishing the truth of important facts related in the books of Moses might easily be adduced. Thus, the history of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, as recorded in the Bible, received credible evidence for its truth, from the testimony of the Dead Sea, and the present state of its waters (see Dr. Marcet's analysis of them in Phil. Trans. 1807). Thus, again, the tribes of Arabs which deduce their descent from Ishmael, cannot be denied to be at least *some* authority for the existence of Ishmael's father. Thus, also, the pyramids of Egypt demonstrate, at the present period, the slavery of the people who built them; and the last of them indicates the unfinished state in which the business was left by the workmen: so that even architectural antiquities, as well as *profane* history, which names the chiefs of the Hebrews as builders of these *mountains*, serves to confirm the truth of the residence of the Israelites in

I shall now pass to the book of JOB, the *authenticity* of which has been more questioned than any of the historical parts of Scripture next to the Pentateuch. The great antiquity of this book, however, has not, as far as I recollect, been much disputed. But it has been made a question, "Is this book dramatic or narrative?" Or, "Was there ever such a man as Job?" Now, although the apostle Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, quotes a passage from the book of Job with his accustomed reference to a book of Divine Authority, "*For it is written*[19]; yet this does not determine the point. But the reality of the history, however poetical and elevated the style may be, may be fairly inferred from the prophecies of Ezekiel, and the Epistle of James. In the former, God himself, in speaking to the prophet, repeatedly mentions *Job*, in

Egypt, and consequently appears in support of the authenticity of the Mosaic history.

I cannot help increasing this already long note, by pointing to one remarkable historical fact, which proves the existence of the law of Moses at the dissolution of the kingdom of Israel, when the ten tribes were carried captive to Assyria by Shalmaneser, and dispersed among the provinces of that extensive empire; that is, about seven hundred and forty-one years before Christ. It was about that time the Samaritans were transported from Assyria to repeople the country, which the ten captive tribes of Israel had formerly inhabited. The posterity of the Samaritans still inhabit the land of their fathers, and have preserved copies of the Pentateuch, two or three of which were brought to this country in the last century but one. The Samaritan Pentateuch is written in old Hebrew characters, and therefore must have existed before the time of Ezra. But so violent were the animosities which subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans, that in no period of their history would the one nation have received any books from the other. They must therefore have received them at their first settlement in Samaria from the captive priest whom the Assyrian monarch sent to teach them how they should fear the Lord, (2 Kings, xvii. 27). This observation is due to M. *Dupin*, whose defence of the books of Moses, against the objections of Hobbes, Spinoza, and F. Simon, is most complete and decisive. As it is too extensive for insertion here, I refer to the Preliminary Dissertation in the first volume of his *Bibliotheca Patrum*.

19 1 Cor. iii. 19. Job. v. 13.

conjunction with *Noah* and *Daniel*, as men of extraordinary righteousness. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God." And in the latter, James exhibits the patience of Job, and its reward, as an example and encouragement to professing Christians[20]. These passages prove, satisfactorily, I think, that Job was a real, and not an ideal, character. It is probable this book of Job has greater antiquity than any other in the Old Testament: for it contains no allusion to the children of Israel, to their grievous afflictions in Egypt, or their happy deliverance from them; though these topics would have given fine scope to Job and his friends in their various conferences. It should seem, indeed, from the age to which Job lived (but little less than two hundred years), that he was a contemporary with the ancient Hebrew patriarchs; and that Uz, his country, was in Edom. The book was most probably written by Moses while he was in the land of Midian, where he had opportunity of coming to the knowledge of this history; and, seeing that it might be very useful to comfort and direct the Israelites, wrote it, under divine superintendence, for their benefit. Thus much, at least, is clear; that the book was written by a Hebrew, by one who had been in Arabia, and by one who wrote before the promulgation of the Mosaic law: these criteria all attach to Moses, and to no other. Besides this, Hebrew scholars affirm that, in the original, the language is often peculiar, the expressions being such as are met with in the writings of Moses, and no where else. This book is indeed the only one from which we can derive a correct knowledge of the patriarchal religion, and which "gives completion to the Bible, by adding the dispensation of the earliest ages to those of the Law and of the Gospel, by which it was successively superseded[21]."

[20] Ezek. xiv. 14, 16, 18, 20. James, v. 11.
[21] See farther, J. D. Michaelis in R. Lowth Prælectiones, Notæ, et

As to the PROPHECIES; the only other compositions in the Old Testament I intend to specify here, it may be observed, that they *all* entered the Septuagint version of which I have already spoken, and which was executed at least two hundred and eighty-seven years before Christ, through the means of Demetrius Phalereus, and by the command of Ptolemy Philadelphus. I know very well that Dean Prideaux affirms, on the evidence of Philo, Josephus, and a few others, who had never seen the original version of the LXX, that it only contained the *law*. But Aristobulus, who was an Alexandrian Jew, tutor to an Egyptian king, living within one hundred years after the translation was made, and having free access to it in the Royal library, affirms, that "the *whole* Sacred Scripture was *rightly* translated," in the way just mentioned. And Justin Martyr says expressly that it contained the *prophetic writings*, and indeed *quotes* the prophets including Moses from it, because he says "that very translation was then in the hands of almost every Jew all the world over[22]." Here, then, is strong evidence of the correctness of the original Greek translation. And the general correspondence of the Hebrew Bibles now in existence, and of the Septuagint copies in Greek, is a proof that both have been handed down to us without material variation, and that either is therefore, in the main, genuine and authentic. Thus, then, we establish the existence of the Prophetical books of the Old Testament (nearly as we now have them), at least two hundred and eighty-seven years before the Christian era; and we may farther remark, that most of them

Epimetra, p. 185. Thomas Scott's Translation of Job; and the elegant Introductory Dissertation to the recent translation of "The Book of Job," by my late learned friend Dr. John Mason Good, F. R. S.

The substance of this dissertation is now inserted in my Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Character of Dr. Good.

22 Euseb. Præp. Evan. l. 1. Just. Mart. Apol. ii. sect 38. See also Origen's quotation from the Septuagint version of Isaiah, in the following Letter on Prophecy, and Gregorie on the LXX Interpreters.

are referred to and quoted, often with high distinction, by Christ and his Apostles, in the several passages mentioned below[23]. I shall only add, that our Saviour's emphatic language, "All things MUST be fulfilled which were written in the *Law* of Moses, and in the *Prophets*, and in the *Psalms* concerning me[24]," is a remarkable attestation in favour of the *truth*, in the fullest sense, of all the books of the Old Testament, since he here adopts the threefold distribution under which the Jews comprehended every portion of their Sacred Volume.

That this latter testimony, however, may bear upon our inquiry with all the weight to which it is entitled, it is now requisite that we investigate the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament. And here, in addition to the general arguments advanced in the beginning of this letter, I shall adduce a few particular

[23] *Isaiah*, in Matt. iv. 14; viii. 17, xii. 17; xiii. 14. Mark, vii. 6. Luke, iii. 4; iv. 7. John, xii. 39, 41. Acts, viii. 28; xxviii. 25. Rom. ix. 27; x. 16, 20, &c. *Jeremiah*, Matt. ii, 17, 18; xvi. 14. *Ezekiel*, compare Rev. xix. 17—21; xx. 8, 9, with Ezek. xxxviii. and xxxix. 1—20. *Daniel*, Ezek. xiv. 14; xxviii. 3. Matt. xxiv. 15. Mark, xiii. 14. *Hosea*, Matt. ii. 15; ix. 13; xii. 7. Rom. ix. 25, 26. *Joel*, Acts, ii. 16. Rom. x. 13. *Amos*, Acts, vii. 42, 43; xv. 15, 17. *Jonah*, Matt. xii. 39. 41; xiv. 4. Luke, xi. 29, 30. *Micah*, Matt. ii. 5, 6. John, vii. 42. *Habakkuk*, Acts. xiii. 41. Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 2. Heb. x. 37, 38. *Haggai*, Heb. ii. 26. *Zechariah*, Matt. xxi. 4, 5; xxvi. 31. Mark, xiv. 27. John, xii. 15; xix. 37. Rev. i. 7. *Malachi*, Matt. xi. 10; xvii. 10—12. Mark, i. 2; ix. 12. Luke, i. 16, 17; vii. 27; xvi. 26. Rom. ix. 13.

[24] Luke, xxiv. 14.—In favour of the genuineness of our present text of the prophecies, the following observation deserves attention. "It may be inferred from the admission of Celsus, that the prophecies were found in the Jewish Scriptures *in his time*; and *since* then no alteration has been made in them by the Jews. But if so, this is the strongest presumption that the Jews had never altered them *before*. For, if, when by the fulfilment of the prophecies in the person of Christ, they were most tempted to erase predictions, so hostile to their own creed, they made no change, much less would they do it when the temptation was diminished." See Mr. F. Cunningham's Hulsean Prize Essay on the books of Origen against Celsus. The same inference is deducible from Justin Martyr's controversy with Trypho the Jew.

evidences. Now, first, it is indisputable, that the primitive publishers of Christianity wrote books containing an account of the life and doctrine of their master, several of which bore the names of the various books which now constitute the New Testament; and, farther, passages cited from those books by very early writers, are found in the copies now existing of the respective books. Secondly, the early Christians had as good opportunities of satisfying themselves as to the genuineness of these books, as other ancients had with regard to the genuineness of books on other subjects which they received: and since the new religion required considerable renunciations, and exposed its professors to heavy persecutions, it is unreasonable to suppose they would adopt it without a due examination. Thirdly, there were many books issued under the *names* of the Apostles, which were, notwithstanding, rejected by the primitive Christians; which proves that they were not very open to deception. Fourthly, we do not find that either the Jews or the Heathens, with whom the early Christian apologists were engaged, ever called in question the genuineness of the records to which their attention was called. Fifthly, the books of the New Testament were, in very early times, collected into a distinct volume. Thus, EUSEBIUS says that Quadratus and others, the immediate successors of the Apostles, carried the *Gospels* with them in their travels. MELITO speaks of the Old Testament, as in contradiction to the collection called the *New* Testament. TERTULLIAN divides the Christian Scriptures into the *Gospels* and *Apostles*, and calls the whole volume the *New Testament*[25].

But, farther, the principal books of the New Testament are quoted, or alluded to, by a series of Christian writers, in regular succession from the apostolic times. IGNATIUS, for example, became bishop of Antioch

[25] See on this, and connected subjects, Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. lib. ii. cap. 23; lib. iii. cap. 3, 4. 25. 39; lib. v. cap. 8. 24; lib. vi. cap. 21. 23; lib. vii. cap. 25, &c.

thirty-seven years after Christ's ascension. In his most interesting Epistles are undoubted allusions to the Gospels of Matthew and John, though they are not marked as quotations.

POLYCARP, who had been taught by the Apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, has nearly forty allusions to the New Testament in one short epistle, several of them quoted, without hesitation, as the words of Christ. He obviously quotes from Matthew, the Acts, Romans, 1st and 2d Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1st and 2d Thessalonians, 1st and 2d Timothy, 1st Peter, and 1st John.

JUSTIN MARTYR, who died latest about the year 163, has several distinct and copious extracts from the Gospels and the Acts: and by his calling Jesus Christ the Son of God and "*Apostle*," which is no where done in Scripture but in Hebrews, iii. 1, it would seem that he was acquainted with that Epistle. In all his works there are but two instances in which he refers to any thing, as said or done by Christ, which is not related in the Gospels now extant. All his references suppose the books notorious, and that there were no other accounts of Christ received and credited. He also says expressly, that the "Memoirs of the Apostles (which elsewhere he calls the *Gospels*) are read in public worship."

HEGESIPPUS, a converted Jew, who flourished thirty years after Justin, says, that in his journey from Palestine to Rome, "in every city the same doctrine was taught, which the *law*, and the *prophets*, and *the* LORD teacheth."

POTHINUS, bishop of Lyons about 170, then ninety years old, sent an epistle to Asia containing an account of the sufferings of that Church. In this epistle he makes exact references to the Gospels of Luke and John, and to the Acts of the Apostles.

IRENÆUS, successor to Pothinus, and who asserts that "he had *seen* Polycarp," gives positive testimony to most of the books of the New Testament. He does not, however, quote Jude: but from the book of Revelation he makes frequent and large quotations. He

asserts, that the story which the Gospels exhibit is that which the Apostles told, and that the Gospels were written, "*as the foundation and pillar of our faith.*" He then describes the authors, traces the origin, and defends the genuineness of their histories. He affirms also, that in his time there were *four*, and *only four* Gospels, which by his references appear to be those we now have[26].

These persons, it should be remarked, though their

[26] Words can scarcely be framed to declare more clearly the authenticity of the four Gospels, than the following from the Third Book of Irenæus, against Heresies:—"We have not received," says this Father, "the knowledge of the way of our salvation by any other than those by whom the Gospel has been brought to us; which Gospel they first preached, and afterwards by the will of God committed to writing, that it might be for time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith. For after our Lord rose from the dead, and they (the Apostles) were endued from above with the power of the Holy Ghost coming down upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things. They went forth to all the ends of the earth, declaring to men the blessing of heavenly peace, having all of them, and every one alike, the Gospel of God. Matthew then, among the Jews, wrote a Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel at Rome, and founding a church there. And after their exit (death, or departure), Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter: and Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the Gospel preached by him (Paul). Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, he likewise published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus, in Asia. And all these have delivered to us, that there is one God, the Maker of the heaven and the earth, declared by the law and the prophets, and one Christ, the Son of God." "The Word," says he again, "the former of all things, who sits upon the cherubim and upholdeth all things, having appeared unto men, has given us a Gospel of a fourfold character, but joined in one spirit.—The Gospel according to John, declares his primary and glorious generation from the Father, *In the beginning was the Word.*—But the Gospel according to Luke being of a priestly character, begins with Zacharias the priest offering incense to God.—Matthew relates his generation, which is according to man, *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.*—Mark begins from the prophetic spirit which came down from above to men, saying, *The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is written in Esaias the prophet.*" Adv. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 11, et apud Grabe, p. 221; *vide* Lardner's Credibility, vol. ii. p. 159, edit. Kippis.

testimonies concur, lived in countries remote from one another. Ignatius flourished at Antioch; Polycarp, at Smyrna; Justin Martyr, in Syria; Pothinus and Irenæus, in France.

ATHENAGORAS, who lived between 166 and 178, and before his conversion was an Athenian philosopher, wrote an able Apology for Christianity, which he addressed to the emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and Lucius Commodus. In this, and in his discourse on the Resurrection, he quotes Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1st and 2d Corinthians, Galatians, and 1st Timothy. He seems also to refer to passages in James, 2d Peter, and Revelation.

TERTULLIAN, presbyter of Carthage, flourished at the end of the second and beginning of the third century. In his works, which are numerous and still well known, he expressly quotes all the books of the New Testament, except the Epistle of *James*, the second Epistle of *Peter*, and the third of *John*. It has been remarked, that there are more quotations from the New Testament in his writings, than from the various writings of TULLY in all the ancient books in the world. This writer intimates, that the actual *autographs* of the Apostolic writings, or at least some of them, were preserved till the age in which he lived, and were then to be seen[27].

After Tertullian, the successive, though in part cotemporaneous writers, HIPPOLYTUS, ORIGEN, GREGORY, DIONYSIUS, CYPRIAN, ARNOBIUS, &c. all of whom furnish strong and decided testimonies, bring us to the time of EUSEBIUS, who flourished about the year 315, and was the most accurate historian among the ancient Christian writers. He mentions it as a fact well known, and asserted by Origen and others, his predecessors, that the four Gospels of *Matthew, Mark, Luke,* and *John*, the *Epistles* of *St. Paul, one* of *St. Peter*, and *one* of

[27] Age jam, qui voles curiositatem melius exercere in negotio salutis tuæ, percurre Ecclesias Apostolicas, apud quas ipsæ adhuc cathedræ Apostolorum suis locis præsident, apud quas ipsæ Authenticæ Literæ eorum recitantur. *De Præscript. adversus Hæreticos.*

St. John, were UNIVERSALLY received by the Church. He says Origen calls them *ευαγγιλια αναντιρρητα* and *ομολογημενοι*, as not being able to find that they had ever been disputed. And, though the *Acts* are not expressly mentioned by Origen in this catalogue, Eusebius himself declares that he has no scruple concerning that book; nay, even Origen, in another place, mentions the Acts as written by Luke, and pays the same regard to them as to the other books of the New Testament. Origen, in fact, quotes from twenty-nine books of the Old Testament, from all in the New but the Epistle to Philemon, 2 John, and Jude; and his quotations correspond very accurately with our present text. As to those seven books of the New Testament, *i. e.* the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the Epistle of *James*, the 2d of *Peter*, the 2d and 3d of *John*, *Jude*, and the *Revelation*, which had been disputed, and were therefore called by Eusebius *αντιλεγομενοι*; even he asserts, that they were at length introduced into the *Canon*, that is, into the number of those books which Christians regard as the rule of their faith and practice, and which they distinguish from other books written by persons whom they thought less eminently under the divine direction, whatever their sanctity might be[28].

From the time of Eusebius, the works of Christian

[28] Euseb. Eccles. Hist. l. iii. c. xxv. Jerom also affirms that the Epistle to the Hebrews "has been received as the Apostle Paul's, not only by the eastern churches, but by *all* the ancient churches." Besides this, let it be remarked, that St. Peter's reference in his 2d Epistle, iii. 15, 16, is, evidently, to the Epistle to the Hebrews. Bishop Kidder has an observation relative to this epistle, richly worth transcribing:—"Of all the books of the New Testament, I know not any, where the mystical senses of the passages of the Old Testament, and applications of them to the Messias (current among the Jews), are so frequent as in the Epistle to the Hebrews. This is a probable argument (independent of all others) that it was written by St. Paul; who, having been brought up by Gamaliel, a famous doctor, may be presumed to be well versed in the mystical sense of the places of the Old Testament. And he might use the greater liberty in this way, because he wrote to the Hebrews, who were much used to that way of interpretation, and were best able to judge

writers abound in references to the New Testament. But, instead of citing more, I may next observe, that the Scriptures were spoken of, and either received by the various early sects among Christians, or so appealed to, by them, as to prove their existence, nearly in the present shape. Thus, Tertullian assures us that *Dositheus* (who was a cotempoiary with the Apostles) was the first who dared to reject the authority of the prophets, by denying their inspiration: but both he and his followers allowed the five books of Moses to be divine. The *Ebionites* again, in the first century, allowed the existence of all the books of the New Testament, but only received as *divine* the Gospel by Matthew. The *Valentinians*, about the year 120, appealed to the *evangelic* and *apostolic* writings. The testimony of Chrysostom (A. D. 398) is, that "though *many* heresies have arisen, yet *all* have received the *Gospels*, either entire or in part."

In favour of the early existence of the principal books of the New Testament, I must not omit to urge that the first heathen adversaries of Christianity speak of the historical books as containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded. CELSUS, for example, in the second century, writing against Christianity,

of that method which he used. I cannot but relate a passage of a late learned writer upon this occasion. (P. Simon, Hist. Crit. N. T. c. 21.) He tells that he gave this Epistle to the Hebrews to a Jew to read, who was greatly acquainted with their ancient authors. Upon the perusal of it, the Jew frankly avowed that that book could be writ by none but by some great *Mekabul* (*i. e.* man of tradition) of his own nation. This *Jew* was so far from affirming that the writer of that Epistle has set aside the true sense of the Scripture, by allegories according to his own fancy, that he celebrated his profound knowledge in the sublime sense of the Bible, and spake of this great Mekabul (as he called him) with admiration." Kidder's Messias, Part ii. c. 5.

For a masterly examination of the internal evidence furnished by the Epistle to the Hebrews, that it was written by Paul, and a candid investigation of the objections of Bertholdt, Schultz, &c. see Stuart's Commentary on the Hebrews, vol. i.

alludes to books written by the disciples of Jesus. He accuses the Christians of *altering* the Gospel, but this accusation is not made out by any *important* variations existing in the present day. He says his arguments are drawn from *their own writings:* and he evidently quotes from Matthew's and John's Gospels, from the Acts of the Apostles, from the various Epistles of Paul, Peter, and John. He makes the largest and most remarkable concessions about Jesus Christ; acknowledging the truth of his nativity, his journey into Egypt, his passing from place to place with his disciples, the fact of his miracles, his being betrayed, and lastly his passion and death; affirming, that after he was betrayed, he was "bound,"—"scourged,"—"stretched upon the cross,"—that he "drank vinegar,"—that after his death he was "said to have appeared twice," but that "he did not appear to his enemies." He speaks, moreover, of the slaughter of the infants, of the descent of the Holy Ghost, of Christ's divinity, his worship; and collectively of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is true he ridicules most of these particulars; but he does not attempt to *deny* them, which he would have been ready enough to do, could he have done it with any show of reason[29]. He states, indeed, and this most probably was the case, that the reading of certain passages was not *exactly* the same in all the copies; but he never questions the truth of the proposition, that the Gospels were written by the Apostles and Evangelists to whom the first Christians have ascribed them. He does not even let drop a single hint, or attempt an argument upon the matter. And yet his opportunities were excellent, his inclination is not to be doubted (for

[29] Lardner's Heath. Test. vol. iii. cap. 18; Cunningham's Hulsean Essay, pp. 14. 20; and Gyles on the Authenticity of the New Testament, pp. 52. 56.. By the way, the remarkable testimony of *Tacitus* ought not to be omitted in this enumeration. "Auctor nominis ejus *Christus*, qui, Tiberio imperante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum, supplicio adfectus erat." Annal. l. xv. c. 44. The entire passage from which this is extracted deserves attention.

the passages preserved in Origen prove that he was a most virulent opposer of Christianity), and his abilities are extolled by the infidel writers themselves. We have their own word for it, that he was a surprising philosopher. "We put it therefore to the judgment and the candour of our adversaries, whether we are not sufficiently warranted in the conclusion, that Celsus did not call in question the genuineness of the inspired records, because 'he could not find any plausible reason for doing so,' because he had marked his ground, and was well aware that any insinuation which would have affected their genuineness would have affected that of every ancient writer, and, if carried to its utmost length, would have unsettled the foundations of all historical belief."

PORPHYRY again, in the third century, though a most inveterate enemy to Christianity, not only allowed that there was such a person as Christ, but honoured him as a most wise and pious man, and one who was translated into heaven. He thought, however, that, by overthrowing the Gospels and the Acts, he should overthrow the Christian Religion itself. Speaking of Matthew, in writing against the Christians, he calls him *their* Evangelist. "He possessed (says Michaelis) every advantage which natural abilities or political situation could afford, to discover whether the New Testament was a genuine work of the Apostles and Evangelists, or whether it was imposed upon the world after the decease of its pretended authors. But no trace of this suspicion is any where to be found, nor did it ever occur to Porphyry to suppose that it was spurious[30]."

JULIAN, in the fourth century, recites the sayings of Christ in the very words of the Evangelists, states the early dates of these records, and calls them by the names they now bear, without questioning their genuineness. He endeavours to lessen the reputation of Christ's life and miracles, by telling the world that he

[30] Euseb. Dem. Evang. l. iii. p. 134. Marsh's Michaelis, vol. i. p. 43.

"did nothing worthy of note all the while he was here upon earth (notwithstanding all the noise that was made about him), except a person will reckon it a great work, to open the eyes of the blind, to restore limbs to the lame, and deliver persons possessed, from the power and enchantment of devils[31]." His great object seems always to cause the *Divinity* of Jesus Christ to be suspected; and therefore he argues that neither *Matthew, Mark, Luke,* nor *Paul* himself, ever presumed in direct terms to call him God, but it was St. John (ὁ χρηστὸς Ιωάννης) who talked after this manner: that John, perceiving how the persuasion of Christ's being God prevailed mightily among the Christians dispersed through the cities of Greece and Italy, took upon him to assert the same doctrine in *his* Gospel, with a view to humour them, and obtain himself reputation[32]. Now, however wrong may be the reason assigned here for John's conduct, the concession of Julian is important, in so far as it proves that he took the writings which in his time bore the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John,

[31] Cyril Alexander. contra Julian l. vi. p. 191. Ed. Par. 1638.

[32] Cyril contra Julian, l. x p. 327. In another place, Julian, after certain accusations, says to the Christians, "But these are your own inventions; for Jesus has no where directed you to do such things, nor yet Paul: the reason is, that they never expected you would arrive at such power: they were contented with deceiving maid-servants and slaves, and by them some men and women; such as Cornelius and Sergius. If there were, then, any men of eminence brought over to you, I mean in the times of Tiberius and Claudius, when these things happened, let me pass for a liar in every thing I say." From this quotation we may conclude, that Christianity was first preached in the reigns of the emperors Tiberius and Claudius; that Cornelius a Roman Centurion at Cæsarea, and Sergius Paulus, Proconsul at Cyprus, were converted to the faith of Jesus before the end of the reign of Claudius (Acts, x. and xiii.); and that the Acts of the Apostles is a genuine and true history. Dr. Lardner vol. viii. p. 404) states this argument very forcibly. Julian challenges the Christians to produce the names of any eminent men (except Cornelius and Sergius Paulus) converted (from the Gentiles) to Christianity in the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius. This is a proof that Julian did not and could not contest the truth of the history in the Acts of the Apostles.

and Paul, to be the genuine productions of those authors; and farther, because it shows that John's Gospel bore then the same testimony respecting the divinity of Jesus Christ which it now bears.

Besides these, there are several other evidences of the genuineness and truth of the various books of the New Testament, into which I cannot now enter minutely. But I must briefly advert to the cogent arguments so ably advanced by Dr. Paley, drawn from the numerous obviously *undesigned* coincidences, mutually subsisting between the several Epistles of St. Paul, and the History of the Acts of the Apostles: these coincidences are so little seen by common observers, that it is impossible to suppose them the effect of forgery; an examination of them is sufficient to prove that neither the history was forged to square with the letters, nor the letters to accord with the history; that they are too numerous and close to be accounted for by the accidental, or by the designed, concurrences of fiction, or in any other way than by the uniformity of the tendency of truth to one point[33]."

I have already remarked, on the authority of Eusebius, that some of the books now admitted into the New Testament were for a while disputed in the early ages of the Church. I may here add, that a few small portions of particular books have had their authenticity called in question by modern critics. Of the latter class are the first two chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, which have been recently much controverted by those who impugn the doctrine, or rather fact, of Christ's miraculous conception, stated in those chapters, and some of whom forget that the same fact is asserted in Luke's Gospel. Without entering at large into this question, it may suffice to remark that Justin Martyr,

[33] For a full development and application of this train of argumentation, see Dr. Paley's admirable work, entitled "*Horæ Paulinæ.*" This book has now been published more than thirty years, during all which period, though many of the Infidel host have "gnashed their teeth" at it in private, *not one* has attempted to refute it.

and Clement of Alexandria, have quoted from these two chapters, without signifying any doubt of their authenticity; that Celsus quotes more than once from the first of these chapters, and refers to the second; and that Origen, in replying to him, admits that they are authentic; that the massacre of the children (a supposed incredible event on which the objections of several rest) is confirmed by Macrobius[34] as a thing well known in his time; and, lastly, to affirm, on the authority of a very learned critic, Bishop Marsh, in his notes to Michaelis, that the evidence of the *Greek* manuscripts is decidedly in favour of the authenticity of these two chapters: and that the testimony of the ancient versions is equally decisive, these chapters

[34] "Augustus," says he (Saturnal. lib. ii. cap. 4), "having been informed that Herod had ordered a son of his own to be killed, among the male infants within two years old, whom he had put to death in Syria, said, 'It is better to be Herod's *hog* than his *son*.'"

Voltaire, in arguing against this fact, with his usual unfairness, avails himself of an idle tradition, that the children thus massacred amounted to fifteen thousand. We can admit, as readily as Voltaire, that Bethlehem and all its territory would not, at any one moment, contain fifteen thousand male children under two years of age: but this is the language of an exaggerated tradition, and not the sober statement of Holy Writ, so that we need feel no solicitude about it. The testimony of Macrobius more than counterbalances the witticisms of Voltaire. Besides, let it be recollected that Matthew's Gospel was published within so very few years of the event recorded, that the enemies of the gospel, whose hostility was never at rest, would, doubtless, have denied its occurrence on living authority, had it been in their power; yet no vestige of such denial is in existence. Some persons lay great stress upon the silence of Josephus as to this fact; but I think unnecessarily. Are we to call in question every fact that is not mentioned by *every* historian? Such a rule would level all authentic history to its base. Tacitus has omitted many things which Suetonius supplies, and Dion Cassius specifies many particulars mentioned by neither of the other two; and, with regard to the history of our own country, Philip Henry, Richard Baxter, and Mrs. Hutchinson relate many things, both curious and important, of Charles I. and his cotemporaries, which none of our eminent historians have noticed. These are received by men of sound judgment upon their own evidence, and without impeaching, in consequence, the veracity of others who have not adverted to them.

being contained in them all. Besides, how can it well be imagined that those two are spurious, when the beginning of the third chapter is considered? What writer would begin a history with the phrase, "In *those* days[35]?"

You will expect that I should produce some evidences in favour of the genuineness of the Apocalypse, or Revelation of St. John, especially since this book has been given up as doubtful by some late writers in favour of the New Testament. Allow me, then, to observe on this subject, that Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clemens Alexandrinus allow the Apocalypse to be an ancient book, and ascribe it to "*John the disciple of the Lord;*" and Justin, as well as others, asserts that "it was written by divine inspiration."

[35] There is a very able defence of the authenticity of the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel in the Quarterly Review, vol. i. p. 320—330, from which I should have been happy to borrow some passages, were I not compelled by my plan to consult brevity. But Dr. Magee's summary, being concise and forcible, is here inserted. "How, then," says he, "stands the evidence upon the whole? The *Syriac* Version, which is one of Apostolical antiquity, and the *old Italic*, both contain the two chapters. *Ignatius*, the only *Apostolical Father who had occasion to make reference to them*, does so. The *Sibylline Oracles* do the same. *Justin Martyr* does the same. *Celsus*, the bitter enemy of the Christian faith, does the same. *Hegesippus*, a Hebrew Christian, does the same. *Irenæus*, and all the Fathers who succeed him, it is admitted on all hands, do the same. And the chapters are at this day found in every manuscript and every version of the Gospel of St. Matthew, which is extant throughout the world. Thus have we one continued and unbroken series of testimony from the days of the Apostles to the present times; and, in opposition to this, we find only a vague report of the state of a Hebrew copy of St. Matthew's Gospel, said to be received amongst an obscure and unrecognised description of Hebrew Christians, who are admitted, even by the very writers who claim the support of their authenticity, to have mutilated the copy which they possessed, by removing the genealogy. I should not have dwelt so long upon a subject, which is at this day so fully ascertained, as the authenticity of the first two chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, did it not furnish a fair opportunity of exhibiting the species of evidence, which Unitarian critics are capable of resisting; and the sort of arguments with which they do not scruple to resist it." Magee on the Atonement, vol. ii. p. 470.

And, if we may credit the testimonies of Eusebius and Jerom,—who had in their hands the writings of many of the ancients which are now lost,—Papias, Melito, Theophilus of Antioch, and Apollonius, *all in the second century*, received and quoted it. Indeed, *Melito* wrote a commentary upon this book: and he, being bishop of Sardis, one of the seven churches addressed, could neither be ignorant of their tradition respecting it, nor impose upon them as to its nature and contents. Consider, in addition to this, the author's own language. "The Revelation of *Jesus Christ*," &c.—"sent and signified by his angel unto his servant *John*." "*John* to the seven churches." "I *John*, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation"—"was in the isle that is called *Patmos*, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." This same writer, who thus positively and unequivocally declares himself to be JOHN, imprisoned in the isle of Patmos, writing, under inspiration, on the Lord's day, affirms that "ALL *liars* shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," and in another place excludes from celestial glory "*whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*." Adopt, for a moment, the hypothesis that this book was forged, and nothing can be more shocking and blasphemous than the conduct of its author in impiously assuming the language of "Him who searcheth the reins and the heart;" admit, on the contrary, the genuineness and authenticity of the book, and you are overpowered with the majesty and sublimity of its language, the purity and excellence of its precepts, the awfulness of its denunciations, the supernatural grandeur of its promises; and, to stamp the highest possible authority upon the whole, bear in mind that it contains *prophecies*, several of which have already been accomplished.

Dr. Priestley, in reference to the subject before us, says, "This book of Revelation, I have no doubt, was written by the Apostle John: and Sir Isaac Newton, with great truth, declares that *he does not find any other*

book of the New Testament so strongly attested, or commented upon so early as this. Indeed, he adds, I think it impossible for any intelligent and candid person to peruse it without being struck, in the most forcible manner, with the peculiar dignity and sublimity of its composition, superior to that of any other writing whatever; so as to be convinced that, considering the age in which it appeared, none but a person divinely inspired could have written it. Also the numerous marks of genuine piety that occur through the whole of this work will preclude the idea of imposition, in any person acquainted with human nature[36]."

My labours on the multifarious topics of this letter may now draw to a close. I shall leave you in your future meditations to appreciate the full weight of what I have adduced. In opposition to it you will have merely to place the reiterated, though perfectly *unsupported*, assertion, that the Scriptures are forged. But had I not wished to put you in possession of a condensed body of evidence, by referring to which you may "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," I might have refuted this assertion by simply referring to the great *end* of the Sacred Volume, and the unity of design in all its authors. I might have affirmed, without fear of contradiction, that the coincidence of the histories, precepts, promises, threatenings, and prophecies of the Scriptures, in that great end, "the glory of God, and the holiness and happiness of man," is an irrefragable argument, not only of their genuineness and truth, but of their divine authority. I might have affirmed, that if the several writers had been guided by their own spirits, and not by the illuminating and supporting influences of the Spirit of truth, they could neither have unfolded to us the various dispensations of God tending to this one point, nor have pursued it themselves with such entire steadiness and uniformity through so many different ages of the world. Viewed

[36] Notes on Scripture, vol. iv. p. 573.

in this light, the *gradual* opening of the design is an invincible argument. The wisdom of man, if it could ever have formed such a design (though that, as I have shown in a former letter, was far from the case), would have rushed forward to the grand conclusion precipitately. On the whole, then, I think every candid inquirer after truth must be constrained to admit, that the various writers of the Bible were *not* deceivers, that the books they have left us are *genuine*, that the religion contained in those books is *true*, that it emanated from GOD. Whence, indeed,

> —— "but from HEAVEN should men unskill'd in arts,
> In different ages born, in different parts,
> Weave such *agreeing* truths? or how? or why?
> Should *all* conspire to cheat us with a lie?
> Unask'd their pains, ungrateful their advice;
> *Starving* their gains, and *martyrdom* their price."
>
> DRYDEN.

There remains only one other question to consider before I terminate this letter, namely, "Have the Scriptures descended pure to our hands, or do the copies extant differ materially from those which existed in the primitive ages?" Now, on this point, it may be stated with regard to the NEW TESTAMENT, as the universal opinion of all Biblical critics of competent knowledge and judgment, that we have received it pure and genuine. This is evinced by the accordance of the early versions with our present Greek text; by the collations which have taken place of great numbers of existing manuscripts (being much more numerous, indeed, than the manuscripts of *any other* ancient writing), and some of them extremely ancient; which collations, while they show that mistakes, as it was to be expected, have been made in the individual manuscripts by the transcribers, prove those mistakes to be of trifling importance, such as never affect the relation of any important fact, or the statement of any important doctrine, either respecting faith or morals, and afford the means of correcting them: and by the utter

impossibility that either negligence or design could have introduced, without detection, any material alteration into a book dispersed among millions in widely distant countries, and among many discordant sects; regarded by them all as the rule of their faith and practice; and in constant and regular use among them all in public worship, in private meditation, and in their vehement and unceasing controversies with each other[37].

With regard to the BIBLE in general, including both the Old Testament (or Covenant) and the New, a cogent proof of the general conformity of our present copies of the several books, with those which existed in early times, is derived from an examination of the works of the Fathers of the Christian Church. If we take, for example, the epistle of CLEMENS ROMANUS to the Corinthians, written at latest about A. D. 70, we shall find at least *thirty-four* express quotations from different parts of the Pentateuch, *four* from the book of Joshua, *two* from Esther, *ten* from Job, *thirty* from the Psalms, *four* from the book of Proverbs, *sixteen* from the prophecies of Isaiah, *three* from Jeremiah, *one* from Ezekiel, *three* from Daniel, *one* from Jonah, *one* from Habakkuk, *one* from Malachi. In the New Testament,

[37] Gisborne's Familiar Survey, p. 229. Doddridge's Pneumatology, &c. Lect. 118, 119. "Not frighted (says that very eminent critic *Dr. Bentley*) with the thirty thousand various readings, I, for my part, and, as I believe, many others, would not lament, if out of the old MSS. yet untouched ten thousand more were faithfully collected: some of which, without question, would render the text more beautiful, just, and exact; though of no consequence to the main of religion; nay, perhaps wholly synonymous in the view of common readers, and quite *insensible* in any modern version." Philaleuth. Lipsiens. p. 90. See also pp. 111—114.

On the subject of *Various Readings*, the critical reader may consult the Eclectic Review, vol. v. pp. 236—250; a small but instructive pamphlet in reply to the blasphemous "Manifesto of the Christian Evidence Society," by my esteemed friend, Dr. J. Pye Smith; and the Rev. T. Hartwell Horne's *Introduction to the Critical Study of the Holy Scriptures.* I cannot refer to this work, without cordially recommending it, as constituting a most valuable accession to biblical literature, serving, indeed, to supply a serious desideratum long felt by our theological students.

two from St. Luke's Gospel, *one* from the Acts of the Apostles, *fourteen* from the Epistles of St. Paul, including *three* from that to the Hebrews, *three* from the Epistles of St. Peter, *three* from that of James, and *one* from that of Jude. Some of these are long quotations, nearly of whole chapters; several of them are introduced by the notices, "*Thus it is written,*" "*Thus saith the Scripture,*" "*The Holy Spirit itself beareth witness,*" &c.; and *all* of them agree with the corresponding passages in our present copies. This I affirm, not upon the authority of others, but from a careful inspection; and I think it furnishes a most striking proof of the general integrity of the Scriptures *we* possess. So far as I have carried the comparison through the works of the Fathers of the first three centuries, the inference from it increases in force: and I have no doubt that those who have leisure and inclination to pursue this train of inquiry will find its result irresistible.

The Bible has also unexpectedly met with strong additional confirmation, as to the correctness of the most received versions, in the discoveries of recent travellers in India. Dr. Buchanan especially, who in 1806 visited the Syrian churches, amounting to one hundred and nineteen, in Malayala, was informed by the inhabitants that no European had, to their knowledge, visited the place before. Their liturgy is derived from that of the early church of Antioch. They affirm too, that their version of the Scripture was copied from that used by the primitive Christians at Antioch, and brought to India before or about the council of Nice, A. D. 325, at which council some ecclesiastical historians inform us *Joannes*, bishop of India, attended. These Syrian Christians allege also, that their copies have ever been exact transcripts of that version, without known error, through every age, down to this day. There is one volume found in a remote church of the mountains, which merits particular description:—it contains the Old and New Testaments, engrossed on strong vellum, and written with beautiful accuracy. The character is

Estrangelo-Syriac, and the words of every book are numbered. This volume is illuminated, but not after the European manner, the initial letters having no ornament. Prefixed to each book there are figures of principal Scripture characters (not rudely drawn), the colours of which are distinguishable; and in some places the enamel of the gilding is preserved: but the volume has suffered injury from time or neglect, some of the leaves being almost entirely decayed. In certain places the ink has been totally obliterated from the page, and has left the parchment in its natural whiteness; but the letters can, in general, be distinctly traced from the impress of the pen, or from the partial corrosion of the ink. The Syrian church assigns to this manuscript a high antiquity; and alleges that it has been for some centuries in the possession of their bishops; and that it was industriously concealed from the Romish inquisition in 1599: but its true age can only be ascertained by a comparison with old manuscripts in Europe of a similar kind; and from such a comparison its date has been referred to the seventh century. On the margin of the drawings are some old Roman and Greek letters, the form of which may lead to a conjecture respecting the age in which they were written. This copy of the Scriptures has admitted as canonical the epistle of Clement, in which respect it resembles the Alexandrine manuscript: but it has omitted the Revelation,—that book having been accounted apocryphal by some churches during a certain period in the early ages. The order of books in the Old and New Testament differs from that of the European copies,—this copy adhering less to unity of subject in the arrangement than to chronological order. The very first emendation of the Hebrew text proposed by Dr. Kennicot (Gen. iv. 8), is to be found in this manuscript. The disputed passage, 1 John v. 7, is not to be found in it: in almost every other respect, its several books agree with those which Europeans obtained ages ago through other channels[38].

[38] Tilloch's Philosophical Magazine, No. 115.

I have only to add, that this most valuable and interesting manuscript is now in England. Mar Dionysius, the resident bishop of Cadanette, presented it to Dr. Buchanan, who again presented it to the University of Cambridge, in whose public library it is now lodged. It has been lately examined with great care and skill by Mr. Yeates, who has published a more minute account of it than the above, in the Christian Observer[39]. These particularities, in reference and description, will prove to you the value I attach to the discovery of this manuscript. Its existence will compel unbelievers to drop, as broken and pointless, their favourite weapon against the genuineness of our Scriptures. I therefore consider its preservation as another interposition of Divine Providence in favour of the Christian Religion; another reward to European Christians for their zeal and activity in transmitting the benefits of the Gospel to heathen nations: and I rejoice in this fresh instance in which—

> "I may assert eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God with men."

LETTER VI.

On the Evidence deducible from the Prophecies.

It is well, my dear Friend, for Christians in general, that they can arrive at a perfect conviction of the truth of the religion they profess, a well-grounded assurance of "the hope that is in them[1]," without instituting so

[39] Christian Observer, for May and June, 1810. A still fuller account of it has been published by Mr. Yeates in a separate volume. He has also given, in the Christian Observer, for October, 1812, an interesting account of the Ethiopic Christians in Abyssinia; who amount to many millions; whose origin may be safely traced to the apostolic age; and who, having the same ordinances with other Christians, possessing likewise pure doctrine, and copies of the Holy Scriptures, which, though they have descended to them in an independent channel, agree in all essential points with our own,—thus furnish *another* powerful evidence of the genuineness of the sacred writings.

[1] 1 Peter, iii. 15.

long an investigation as that, the results of which were laid before you in my last letter. Such an inquiry may serve to convince unbelievers that even the *external* evidences of Christianity are, in their *nature*, really irresistible to all those who do not voluntarily sheath their understandings against the impressions of evidence flowing from all quarters, and shut their eyes against the light of truth: but those who are willing to derive conviction from the fountain of divine knowledge, have a far shorter way to arrive at it than that we have so recently been tracing. The Bible is its own witness: the predictions scattered through it prove its divine origin. Other evidences *may* obtain admission to the mind, but this species demands it: others may dispel darkness, but this comes clothed in light. In the present world we are in a benighted state; but happily "we have a sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts[2]."

Prophecy, viewed in the sense we now wish to contemplate it, that is, as implying the knowledge and announcement of things, which are either secret in their own nature, as the mind and will of God, or so remote in point of space, or distant in point of time, as to be undiscoverable by human skill and foresight; or simply, as denoting the prediction of future events depending on the action of free agents[3], was obviously never intended as evidence of an original revelation. It is plainly unfit for such a purpose, because it is impossible, without some extrinsic proof of its divine origin, to know whether any prophecy be true or false, till the æra arrive at which it ought to be accomplished. Yet

[2] 2 Peter, i. 19.

[3] I here give this restricted definition, because the word is sometimes used in Scripture to denote preaching or teaching. See Nehemiah, vi. 7. 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 3, 4, &c. Indeed, we find the word *prophesying* in Scripture used to denote in general the speaking, or writing, by Divine revelation, whether with reference to doctrines or to matter of fact.

the frequent occurrence of prophecies may be productive of great religious advantages antecedent to their being fulfilled, since it may keep alive a sense of religion, and inspire with a hope of future deliverance from present calamity, such as slavery or banishment. And this seems to have been one great object in delivering the prophecies under the Old Testament dispensation, since most of them pointed to emancipation from either bodily or spiritual bondage.

But whatever may be the tendency or the utility of prophecy previous to its completion, its tendency subsequent to such a completion is, so far as it is known, decidedly and inevitably favourable to the divine appointment of him who delivered the prediction, and, in certain cases, to the divine selection of the person to whom such prediction points. The foreknowledge of future contingent events is universally allowed to be a peculiar attribute of Deity. Future contingencies, such, for example, as those which relate to the rise and fall of nations and states not yet in existence, or to the minute concerns of individuals not yet born, are secrets which it is evident no man or angel can penetrate; their causes being indeterminate, their relations with other things fluctuating and unknown: it follows, therefore, that the prediction of such contingent events cannot otherwise than proceed from God; and farther, since God cannot, without a violation of his perfect Holiness and Rectitude, visibly aid delusion and wickedness, the inference is equally cogent and necessary, that the accomplishment of predictions delivered by those who pretend they have divine authority, amounts to a full proof that they really possess the authority they assume. Other arguments may be evaded; other evidence may not convince; strange effects (though not *miraculous* ones) may be produced by other than divine power: but the plain and complete correspondence of events to the standing records of ancient prophecies, obvious and conspicuous to all who will be at the pains to compare them, and applying accurately

to the nicest shades of the *specified* circumstances, suggests more forcibly the conviction, that the predictions came from God, and were declared to man for the wisest and most important purposes. "This or nothing (says Justin Martyr) is the work of God, to declare a thing shall come to be, long before it is in being, and then to bring about the accomplishment of that very thing, according to the same declaration[4]."

This then is a kind of evidence that may be known, read, and appreciated by all men; and this is the species of evidence with which every part of Scripture, from the Pentateuch to the Apocalypse, abounds. The history of the fall of man is immediately succeeded by the significant prediction of that "Seed of the Woman which should bruise the Serpent's head." Even there the Messiah was marked out so as not to be mistaken: the prophecy has never been applied to another: the "light of the world" shone distinctly, though it might, notwithstanding, glimmer feebly, when seen through the long vista of four thousand years. Previous to the general deluge, the will of God was but seldom declared in prophecy; but almost immediately after that remarkable event, Noah delivered some extraordinary predictions relative to the descendants of his three sons; and those predictions, though they were divulged more than two thousand years before the Christian æra, have been fulfilling through the several periods of time to this day! In like manner the prophecies revealed from time to time, as those concerning the Ishmaelites, those of dying Jacob, of Balaam, of Moses (concerning the Jews), the prophecies relating to Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, the great empires, the destruction of Jerusalem, have been perfectly fulfilled to the minutest particular; and that in several cases where attempts have actually been made to prevent their accomplishment. Moses, for example, foretold, that when the Jews forsook the true God they should be removed

[4] Just. Mart. Apol. ii. sect. 14. This excellent apologist has indeed entered fully into the argument from prophecy, in the Apology just quoted.

into all the kingdoms of the earth; that "they should become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations[5]." None who notice the state of this singular people, scattered yet preserved, every where retaining their identity, no where possessing power, can be so regardless of truth as to deny that this is fully accomplished. Concerning Babylon it was foretold, that it should be shut up and besieged by the Medes, Elamites, and Armenians; that the river should be dried up; that the city should be taken in the midst of a feast; that the conqueror should be named Cyrus[6]. All of which, as you are well aware, came to pass. Concerning Egypt it was predicted, "Egypt shall be a base kingdom: it shall be the basest of kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations." "And there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt[7]." I need not ask whether this prophecy of the fate of Egypt, so celebrated for its antiquity, its power, and its wisdom, is not fulfilled. Concerning Tyre, the prediction and its completion are no less remarkable: "I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more. Thou shalt be no more: the merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more[8]."

[5] Deut. xxviii. 37.

[6] Is. xxi. 2. Jer. li. 11. Is. xliv. 7. 28. Jer. li. 36. Is. xlv. 1.

[7] Ezek. xxix. 14, 15; xxx. 12, 13.

[8] Ezek. xxvi. 14. 21. A remarkable instance in which apparently *discordant* prophecies were strictly accomplished, occurs in the case of Zedekiah. Jeremiah predicted concerning him, that as a captive he should see the king of Babylon, so that "his eyes should behold *his* eyes," and that he should be carried to that city (Jer. xxxii. 4, and xxxiv. 8). Ezekiel declared that "he should not *see* Babylon." (Ezek. xii. 13). How might a contemporary doubter of the divine illumination of those prophets have triumphed on account of the seeming contradiction of these two predictions. But Nebuchadnezzar, who was alike ignorant of both, is the instrument in the divine hands to effect their accomplishment: for Zedekiah was brought into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar *at Riblah*; who, after having commanded his *eyes to be put out*, sent him in "fetters of brass" to Babylon (2 Kings, xxv. 6, 7.)

Now in all these, and a variety of other instances that might be adduced, it cannot with any semblance of reason be pretended, that "Prophecy came in old time by the *will of man*;" the contrary assertion of the Apostle accords far better with a fair induction from the premises before us, that "*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*[9]." Indeed, one of the most acute metaphysicians and ablest reasoners Great Britain ever produced, the friend of Newton, and his advocate against Leibnitz, says, he feels no hesitation in putting the truth of Revealed Religion entirely upon the reality of that prophetic spirit which foretold "the man of sin," and the desolation of Christ's church and kingdom by Antichrist. "If (says he, after enumerating some of the predictions that relate to *Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots*), if, in the days of St. Paul and St. John, there were any footsteps of such a sort of power as this in the world: or, if there ever had been such power in the world: or, if there was then any appearance of probability, that could make it enter into the heart of man to imagine that there ever *could* be any such kind of power in the *world*, much less in the *temple* or church of God: and, if there be not *now* such a power actually and conspicuously exercised in the world: and if any picture of this power, *drawn after the event*, can describe it more plainly and exactly than it was originally described in the words of the prophecy: then may it with some degree of plausibleness be suggested, that the prophecies are nothing more than enthusiastic inventions[10]."

But the weight of evidence accumulates prodigiously when it is drawn from those prophecies which relate to the Messiah. Had only a single prophet left a collection of predictions concerning Christ, specifying the time and manner of his coming, and he had come agreeably to those predictions, it would seem next to impossible to evade the conclusion deducible from it. But in the Bible we have much more. Here is a series

[9] 2 Pet. i. 21. [10] Dr. Clarke's Works, vol. ii. p. 728.

of Prophets, for thousands of years, who regularly succeed each other to foretell the same event, and to depict the benefits it will produce. Nay, more than this, a whole nation constitutes the Messiah's harbingers: they subsist distinct from the rest of the world more than three thousand years, to testify in a body the assurances they entertain respecting him: when he arrives, they disbelieve him, become reluctant witnesses of the truth of the prophecies they have preserved, but willing instruments in "*killing the Prince of life*[11];" and thus in accomplishing those predictions which, though they understood but in part, they constantly hoped to see realized until their hopes were about to be fulfilled!

Nor should it be forgotten that Jesus Christ himself, during his personal ministry on earth, referred the Jews, who were then his enemies and afterwards his murderers, to their own Sacred Books, in order to learn who he was, and what was his office: and that, after his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, his disciples pointed them again to the prophecies which they read regularly in the Synagogue, to convince them that he whom they had slain was "the Messiah who *was* to come." "Search the Scriptures (said Jesus Christ), for in them ye *think* ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me. Ye *will not* come to me, that ye might have life[12]." "Beginning from Moses, and from all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning *himself*[13]." Conformably with this, his Apostles make a like appeal. "To him (says Paul) give all the Prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. Thus he mightily convinced the Jews, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ[14]." So likewise Peter affirms: "Yea, and all the Prophets, from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these

[11] Acts, iii. 15. [12] John, v. 39, 40. [13] Luke, xxiv. 27.
[14] Acts, x. 43; xiii. 27; xv. 15; xviii. 28.

days[15]." This kind of argumentation was so forcible, that many of the Jews were convinced by it, and were "cut to the heart," that they should "ignorantly" have "crucified their King." But the reasoning which prevailed over the prejudices of many Jews in the apostolic times is thought trifling and light by modern freethinkers. If any of the prophecies are obscure, then that obscurity is an argument against them; if, on the contrary, they are plain, then it is boldly affirmed, in opposition to the whole train of history, that they were forged *after* the event. It would be more becoming the ingenuity of these men to show from the Prophets that Jesus Christ was necessarily to rise from the dead, and then to prove from the history that in fact he did never rise. Then they would accomplish something, and we must assent to the force of their reasoning. But if they cannot disprove the fact, their cavilling about the *mode* in which it was foretold is perfectly nugatory. Christ claims to be the person predicted in the Law and the Prophets; his Apostles assert the same claim; and it is far from enough to affirm on the contrary side that some of the prophecies are obscure, since very good reasons may be assigned why such obscurity should exist previously to the completion of prophecy. It might be, for instance, to make the Messiah known to the good, and unknown to the wicked, as was indeed *predicted* by Daniel[16], that God caused him to be, in a certain sense, obscurely foretold. For, had the *manner* of his appearance been clearly described, there would not have been any obscurity even to bad men: and if the *time* had been obscurely predicted, even good men would have felt themselves in darkness. The time, therefore, was clearly declared; but the manner only in figure. Hence it happened that the wicked, apprehending that the promised blessings were merely temporal, were deceived, notwithstanding the clear predictions of the time; while the righteous were not deceived after the

[15] Acts, iii. 24. [16] Dan. xii. 10.

crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The mode of interpreting the promised blessings depends upon the heart, which calls that which it loves—*good;* but the interpretation of the promised time does not depend upon the heart. So that the clear prediction of the time, and the obscure prediction of the blessings, left none to be misled but the wicked, the rejecters of religion by choice.

But the principal question for us to consider is this:—Are there prophecies enow sufficiently plain to prove that Christ is the person foretold in the Old Testament as the Messiah? If there be, it follows, for reasons already assigned, that the Old Testament is the Word of God, Jesus Christ the Saviour of the World, the New Testament not "a cunningly-devised fable," but a structure formed for everlasting duration, which those who endeavour to overthrow will fail in accomplishing, and be found "even to fight against God[17].

First, then, let us attend a little to the *time* and *place* marked out by the Prophets for the appearance of the Messiah. JACOB, on his dying bed, speaks of a person to whom the people should be gathered; this person he calls *Shiloh*, and declares that he shall appear before *Judah* ceases to be a tribe[18].

[17] Acts, v. 39.

[18] Gen. xlix. 10. *Origen*, in his piece *against Celsus*, lib. i. cap. 43, asks, "How Jacob could foretell that the rulers of the Jewish nation, which consisted of no less than *twelve* tribes, should come always of the tribe of Judah?" He proceeds, "this we see has been so evidently and so remarkably verified, that the whole body of the Jews now take their name from that tribe, which held the reins of government in their hands: and it is matter of astonishment to all, who are not biased by prejudice, that this patriarch should not merely predict that the governing power should be vested in the tribe of Judah; but that it should come to a period at an assigned time; for *the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet,* UNTIL *Shiloh come.* And He, for whom the supreme authority was reserved, is come; *the Messiah*, I mean, by whom the true glory of the tribe of Judah was advanced to its greatest height; he who was the prince whom God had promised, and who might lay a fairer claim to that title, *The Desire of Nations*, than any one who ever went before, and certainly than any one who will follow him." Justin Martyr, also, adduces the same text as irrefragable.

DANIEL foretells a glorious kingdom, which God would erect on the ruins of the four grand monarchies, under the government of one whom he calls *the Son of Man;* and whose empire, though small in its origin, should be both universal and eternal[19]. He afterwards predicts that in *seventy weeks* (of years), that is, in four hundred and ninety years, after the issuing of the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem, probably referring to that given in the seventh year of *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, reconciliation should be made for iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness be brought in by one, whom he calls *Messiah the Prince*, who, he declares, shall be *cut off* without any demerits of his own; after which event the prophet predicts that the city of Jerusalem shall be destroyed, and *sacrifices* cease; yet not till the Messiah had confirmed his covenant with many of his people[20].

ISAIAH speaks of an extraordinary child, who should be born of a *virgin*, of the house of *David*, whose name should be called *Immanuel*, who should grow up from infancy to manhood, who should also bear many illustrious titles (such as "*the mighty God*," "*the everlasting Father*"), which indicate him to be more than human: he predicts farther, that this personage should be most eminent for wisdom and piety, and as remarkable for sorrow and sufferings; and yet, finally, that he should establish a most successful and permanent kingdom by very peaceful and gentle methods; these important events commencing with the cure of the blind, the lame, the deaf, and the dumb; thus laying a foundation stone in *Zion*[21].

JOEL foretells an extraordinary effusion of the Spirit of God, and speaks of a remarkable deliverance which should be wrought out in *Mount Zion* and *Jerusalem*[22].

MICAH delivers a prophecy analogous to part of Isaiah's, respecting the glorious and peaceful kingdom

[19] Dan. ii. 34, 35. 44, 45; vii. 13, 14. [20] Dan. ix. 24. 27.

[21] Is. vii. 14; ix. 6—7; xi. 1—10; xlii. 1—7; liii. xxxv. 3. 10; xxviii. 16. [22] Joel, ii. 28—32.

that God would erect in "the latter day;" and afterwards expressly mentions *Bethlehem Ephratah* as the place whence should go forth the Ruler, who should be the Illustrious Shepherd both of the Israelites and of other distant people[23].

HAGGAI prophesies, that, during the time in which the second temple was standing, a temple which was not entirely demolished till the captivity by the Romans (being in Herod's time gradually rebuilt), God would "shake all nations," and the "Desire of all nations" should come into his temple: and that, on this account, the glory of it should be greater than that of the former house, though it was much inferior in external visible ornaments[24].

MALACHI predicts, that JEHOVAH "the Lord" should have a forerunner: and that the Lord himself "should suddenly come to his temple[25]."

Now these and some other prophecies, which I do not here quote, so accurately define the time and place in which the Messiah was to appear, that there was an universal expectation of his appearance, as all the candid Jewish writers acknowledge, just about the period that Jesus Christ was actually upon earth. In point of time and place, then, he corresponds with the results of prophecy.

Secondly. Let us advert to predictions relative to his *Character, Doctrine, Religion,* and final *Triumph.* In these respects we recognise Jesus Christ as foretold in the prophets by the following among a great number of particular circumstances:—That as a prophet he should be like unto Moses[26]. That he should blind the eyes of the wise and learned, and preach the Gospel to the poor and despised; that he should restore health to the diseased, and give light to those who languish in mental and moral darkness[27]. That he should teach the perfect way, and be the instructor of the Gentiles[28].

[23] Mic. iv. 1—5; v. 2—4.
[24] Hag. ii. 6—9.
[25] Mal. iii. 1.
[26] Deut. xviii. 15. Acts, iii. 22.
[27] Is. v. 15; xxxv. 5; ix. 2.
[28] Is. xlii. 6.

That he would write *his* law, not on tables of stone, but on their hearts; and put his fear, which till then was displayed in external ceremonies, into their hearts likewise[29]. That he should sit as a refiner and purifier, to purge his disciples, that they might offer righteous offering[30]. That he should be a sacrifice for the sins of the world, be wounded for the transgressions of his people, bear their iniquities, justify many by the knowledge of him, and make intercession for the transgressors[31]. That he should be the chief and precious corner-stone, and yet be a stone of stumbling and rock of offence, on which the Jews should fall[32]. That the Jews should reject him, and should themselves be rejected of God, the choice vine bringing forth only wild grapes; and that the chosen people should be rebellious and gainsaying, should stumble at noonday, and henceforward be oppressed[33]. That the stone which was rejected by the builders should be made the principal corner-stone, that it should grow into a great mountain and fill the whole earth[34]. That after the rejection and murder of the Messiah, he should rise again the third day from the dead[35]. That he should ascend into heaven, and sit on the right hand of God, where he should triumph over all his enemies[36]. That the kings of the earth, and all people, should in due time worship him[37]. But that the Jews who rejected him should subsist as a distinct people; yet should be scattered over all nations, and wander about without princes, without sacrifices, without an altar, without prophets, looking for deliverance, and not finding it till a very distant period[38].

Thirdly. The amazing correspondence between the contemptuous treatment and *sufferings* of Jesus Christ,

[29] Jer. xxxi. 33; xxxii. 40. Heb. x. 16.
[30] Mal. iii. 3. [31] Is. liii. [32] Is. xxviii. 16; viii. 14, 15.
[33] Is. v. 2—7; lxv. 2. Deut. xxviii. 28, 29.
[34] Ps. cxviii. 22. Dan. ii. 35.
[35] Ps. xvi. 10. Hos vi. 3. [36] Ps. cx. 1.
[37] Is. lx. 10. 21, 22; liii. 11, 12. [38] Jer. xxxi. 36. Hos. iii. 4, 5.

and the predictions scattered through the Bible, has been traced so clearly by several writers[39], that I need do little else than transcribe their remarks. On comparing the principal predictions with the historical passages, and thus bringing the accounts of the Prophets and of the Evangelists together, it will be found that there is throughout an extraordinary correlation, that the latter become echoes of the former, and that the former specified nothing for the Messiah to suffer which Christ himself did not suffer. ZECHARIAH says, "they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver;" and MATTHEW records that Judas sold Jesus for neither more nor fewer pieces, but that the chief priests "covenanted with them for *thirty* pieces of silver[40]." ZECHARIAH says, they "took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the *potter;*" MATTHEW tells us, "they took the thirty pieces of silver, and gave them for the *potter's field*[41]." The PSALMIST, under the spirit of prophecy, says, when "trouble is near there is *none* to help," and ZECHARIAH says, "Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered;" MATTHEW, in correspondence, affirms, "that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled, *all* the disciples forsook him and fled[42]." ISAIAH says, "he was wounded;" ZECHARIAH, "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced;" and DAVID still more particularly, "they pierced my hands and my feet;" the Evangelists tell us how he was fastened to the cross, and Jesus himself shows "the print of the nails[43]." DAVID predicts, "they shall laugh him to scorn, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, since he delighted in him:"

[39] See especially Bishop Pearson on the Creed, p. 88, &c.; and General Burns's Summary of the Evidences of Christianity, in his valuable little book, the Christian Officer's Complete Armour.

[40] Zech. xi. 12. Matt. xxvi. 15.

[41] Zech. xi. 13. Matt. xxvii. 9, 10.

[42] Ps. xxii. 11. Zech. xiii. 7. Matt. xxvi. 56.

[43] Is. liii. 5. Zech. xii. 10. Ps. xxii. 16. Matt. xxvii. 35. John, xx. 25.

the historian describes the same action, and gives like expressions;—"they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads and saying, He trusted in God, let him deliver him[44]." DAVID exclaims, when prophesying as a type of the Messiah, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he who was both "the root and the offspring of David" determines in whose person the Prophet spoke it,—"*Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani*[45]? ISAIAH foretells, "He was numbered with the *transgressors:*" the Evangelists inform us, he was "crucified between two thieves, one on his right hand, the other on his left[46]." We read in one of the prophetic Psalms, "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink:" and in the Gospel, "they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall[47]." We read again in the Psalms, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture;" and, to fulfil the prediction, "the soldiers took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout: they said, therefore, among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be[48]." In another prophet we read, "He shall be brought like a lamb to the slaughter, and be cut off out of the land of the living[49]:" conformably with this, all the Evangelists declare how like a lamb he suffered; and the Jews themselves acknowledge that he was "cut off." In the institution of the paschal lamb, which typified this "Lamb of God," it was ordained, "Ye shall not break a bone of it:" DAVID, prophesying of the Messiah, says, "He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken:" and, in the event, "He who saw it bare record, and he *knoweth* that he saith true;" and he affirms, "They brake not his legs (though

44 Ps. xxii. 7, 8. Matt. xxvii. 39. 43.
45 Ps. xxii. 1. Matt. xxvii. 46.
46 Is. liii. 12. Matt. xxvii. 38. Mark, xv. 27.
47 Ps. lxix. 21. Matt. xxvii. 34. 48.
48 Ps. xxii. 18. John, xix. 23, 24. 49 Is. liii. 7, 8.

they brake the legs of the malefactors crucified with him), that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken[50]." ISAIAH, prophesying of his burial, says, "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death:" and here again we may admire the exact completion of the prediction; for Jesus was buried like the *wicked* companions of his death, under the general leave granted to the Jews for taking down their bodies from the cross; yet *Joseph* of Arimathea, a RICH man and an honourable counsellor, and *Nicodemus*, a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews, a master of Israel, conspired to make his grave with the *rich*, by "wrapping his body in linen clothes," &c. and "laying it in a new sepulchre," which Joseph of Arimathea had caused to "be made for his own use[51]." When the Scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus Christ for a sign by which they might ascertain his Divine authority, the reply was, "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth[52]:" and on another occasion, when the Jews requested a proof of his authority, he said, "speaking of the temple of his body,"—"Destroy *this* temple, and in *three* days I will raise it up[53]." These sayings were tauntingly thrown in his teeth during his crucifixion by the unfeeling multitude, who, "wagging their heads, said, Ah! thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save *thyself*, and come down from the cross[54]!" Soon, however, Jesus proved that he *had* "power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again[55];" and, to fulfil his own prophecies, as well as all those relating to him that were scattered through the Jewish Scriptures, burst the bars of the tomb, and rose from the dead on the *third* day[56].

The preceding instances are abundantly more than

[50] Num. ix. 12. Ex. xii. 46. Ps. xxxiv. 20. John, xix. 33. 35, 36.
[51] Is. liii. 9. Matt. xxvii. 57. Mark, xv. 43. John, xix. 39, 40.
[52] Matt. xii. 40. [53] John, ii. 19. [54] Mark, xv. 29, 30.
[55] John, x. 18. [56] Luke, xxiv. 7.

sufficient to show that, according to the prophets, thus it behoved the MESSIAH to suffer, to die, and to rise again; and that, according to the testimony of eyewitnesses, who could not be deceived, who had no object to accomplish in deceiving others, and whose testimony is confirmed by their enemies and persecutors, thus JESUS CHRIST DID *suffer*, *die*, and *rise again*. How the contemplation of these things may affect others we cannot always conjecture; but surely the natural tendency of such an astonishing correspondence as that we have been tracing, is to "make our hearts burn within us" with the cheering warmth of conviction, and the pure flame of devotion, similar to what was experienced by the two disciples on that ever-memorable evening, when the risen Saviour "talked with them in their way" to Emmaus, "opened to them the Scriptures, and, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them the things concerning himself[57]."

Suppose that, instead of the spirit of prophecy breathing more or less in every book of Scripture, predicting events relative to a great variety of general topics, and delivering besides almost innumerable characteristics of the Messiah, all meeting in the person of Jesus—there had been only *ten* men in ancient times who pretended to be prophets, each of whom exhibited only *five* independent criteria as to place, government, concomitant events, doctrine taught, effects of doctrine, character, sufferings, or death; the meeting of all which, in one person, should prove the reality of their calling as prophets, and of his mission in the character they have assigned him;—suppose, moreover, that all events were left to *chance* merely, and we were to compute, from the principles employed by mathematicians in the investigation of such subjects, the probability of these *fifty* independent circumstances happening *at all*. Assume that there is, according to the technical phrase, *an equal chance* for the happening or the failure of any

[57] Luke, xxiv. 13. 27. 32

one of the specified particulars; then [58] the probability *against* the occurrence of all the particulars in *any* way, is that of the 50th power of 2 to unity; that is, the probability is greater than 1125000000000000 to 1, or greater than *eleven hundred and twenty-five millions of millions to one,* that all these circumstances do not turn up, even at distinct periods. This computation, however, is independent of the consideration of *time.* Let it then be recollected farther, that, if any one of the specified circumstances happen, it *may* be the day after the delivery of the prophecy, or at any period from that time to the end of the world; this will so indefinitely augment the probability against the contemporaneous occurrence of merely these *fifty* circumstances, that it surpasses the power of numbers to express correctly the immense improbability of its taking place. Be it remembered also, that in this calculation I have assumed the hypothesis *most* favourable to the adversaries of prophecy, and the most unfavourable possible to the well-being of the world, and the happiness of its inhabitants; namely, the hypothesis that every thing is fortuitous; and it will be seen how my argument is strengthened by restoring things to their proper state. If every thing were left to blind chance, it appears that the probability against the fulfilment of only fifty independent predictions in the same time, place, and individual, would be too great to be expressed numerically: how much greater, then, must it be in fact, when all events are under the control of a Being of matchless wisdom, power, and goodness, who hates fraud and deception, who must especially hate it when attempted under his name and authority, who knows all that occurs in all places, and who can dissipate with "the breath of his mouth" every deceiver, and all his delusions? The more we know of the prophecies, and of history, whether sacred or profane, the more we are

[58] Emerson on Chances, prop. 3. Wood's Algebra, art. 419, Chances. This argument is carried still farther in the last edition of Bishop M'Ilraine's Lectures on the Evidences.

struck with the correspondence of predictions and events; their coincidence in hundreds of instances is so palpably notorious that none can deny it: every principle of reason, every result of correct computation, instituted with a view to this inquiry, is in favour of the positions maintained by Christians in all ages. Imagine these to be still doubtful, and what is there else that is stable and certain?

———"If these fall,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble."—MILTON.

But a person who wished to reason in favour of the truth of the Christian Religion from prophecy, need not take this wide field of argument. There are many small portions in some of the prophetic writings, on either of which he may safely make his stand. He may take, for example, either the ninth, thirteenth and fourteenth, forty-fifth, or fifty-third chapters of Isaiah, and challenge any one to account satisfactorily for the exact correspondence of the prediction and the history, except he admit that the prophet was inspired by God to foretell the events. Suppose we fix upon the fifty-third chapter. So striking are its contents, and so exactly were its *distinct* particulars, amounting clearly to ten or twelve, verified in the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ, that there have not been wanting modern Deists to affirm that it was actually composed *after* the Christian æra. This calumny, however, needs no laboured refutation. The Septuagint version is well known, as I remarked in a preceding letter, to have been undertaken nearly three hundred years before Christ; and that version, according to the testimony of one who saw the original, contained the prophecies of Isaiah. Besides, it is an incontrovertible fact, that the Jews in all ages, from the delivery of these prophecies to the present, admitted Isaiah to be taught of God. The later Rabbins, it is true, to avoid the conclusions which Christians deduce from Isaiah, and especially the chapter last specified, have invented a distinction

of a double Messiah, "one who was to redeem us, and another who was to suffer for us; for they say, that there are two several persons promised under the name of the Messiah; one of the tribe of *Ephraim*, the other of the tribe of *Judah;* one the son of *Joseph*, the other the son of *David;* the one to precede, fight, and suffer death; the other to follow, conquer, reign, and never die[59]." But Bishop Pearson proves that this distinction is false as well as novel; and farther, that the Rabbins who preceded Jesus Christ understood the chapter, of which we are now speaking, to be a prediction of the Messiah, and of him alone.

Origen, indeed, informs us[60], that in his time the Jews took another way to evade the difficulties in which the consideration of this chapter placed them. They argued that the prophecy did not relate to one man, but to one people, the *Jews*, who were smitten of God, and dispersed among the Gentiles for their conversion. But to show the absurdity of their interpretation, he pressed them with this sentence from the Septuagint, *απο των ανομιων τȣ λαȣ μȣ ηχθη εις θανατον*: and the argument was so decisive, they could not withstand it. This proves not only the truth of the received interpretation of this famous prophecy, but farther, that the Hebrew text of that time read agreeably to the *εις θανατον* of the Septuagint; otherwise, the Jews, by quoting their own text (Is. liii. 8), and showing that it did not mean "smitten *to death*," would have reprobated the Greek version, and triumphed over the Christian advocate.

It may be farther remarked that, if it be the people of Israel of whom the prophet speaks in this chapter, he makes them to descend from a very base and ob-

59 Pearson on the Creed, p. 185.

60 Orig. contra Celsum, lib. 1. cap. 44. See also Abbadie, who argues with great acuteness and force from this chapter (Isai. liii.) in his work already referred to, sect. iv. chap. 9. His reasoning, also, from the predictions of Daniel, Zechariah, and Malachi, are equally convincing.

scure origin, when he compares them to "a tender plant which grew out of a dry and barren ground:" this cannot well apply to a nation which in its origin was, as Abbadie observes, "the most glorious and magnificent that ever was known; as having been separated and distinguished from all other nations in the person of their first parent, Abraham, and which was honoured with the promises of the covenant." So again, to seize only another feature of this portion "of prophecy,—how was God's people stricken for the iniquity of his people." None could fairly resist the inference that the allusion here was not to the people of God, but to some one who suffered affliction for their sake.

Nor has this remarkable portion of prophecy been successful merely in puzzling and silencing the Jews. It has, under the divine blessing, been instrumental in converting unbelievers in every age of the church. Of this a signal instance has occurred in modern times, namely, that of the celebrated John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, a man, "whom the Muses were fond to inspire, and ashamed to avow," who lived the life of a libertine and Atheist; but who, agreeably to the testimony of Bishop Burnet, died the death "of a penitent Christian." The perusal of this chapter, the meditation upon its complete fulfilment, and upon the beautiful summary it contains of the most peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of Christianity, so operated on the mind of this profligate, though able man, as to lead (in the opinion of the prelate just mentioned) to an unfeigned faith in Him "who was wounded for *his* transgressions, and by whose stripes *he* was healed."

Such then, my friend, being the cogency of the evidence resulting from prophecy, let us not attempt to resist it; such the purity and heavenly tendency of the precepts and doctrines often blended with the predictions, let us yield ourselves to their influence. Let us implant the delightful anticipations of faith upon the triumphant declarations of prophecy, and hail that happy period foretold by Isaiah, when

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill be brought low;
"And the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places a smooth plain;
"And the glory of JEHOVAH shall be revealed;
"And *all flesh* shall see together the salvation of our GOD."

Infidelity, every where active, though always baffled, will suggest the improbability of the completion of the prophecies yet unfulfilled: but when it is considered that many of the predictions, long ago realized, were delivered at the same time, and by the same prophet, as those for whose accomplishment we are waiting, it would be the height of absurdity and impiety to encourage a doubt. It may happen, naturally enough, that the true meaning of a prediction may be disguised, in order that the wayward wills of men may not operate for its prevention; but this is no reason for its rejection. Prophecies are like writings in cipher, which require either tutors or events to explain their hidden meaning, and render them natural and intelligible. This, with regard to the Old Testament predictions, "is what Jesus Christ and his Apostles have done. They have opened the seal, they have rent the veil, and developed the spiritual sense. They have taught us that our enemies are our passions, that our Redeemer is a *spiritual* Redeemer: that he is to have a first and a second coming, the one in humility to abase the proud, the other in glory to exalt the humble; that Jesus Christ is God as well as man [61]."

I am, &c.

[61] Pascal's Thoughts: "The Law figurative."

LETTER VII.

On the Evidence deducible from Miracles; and on the Credibility of Human Testimony.

THE advocates of revealed religion affirm, without any fear of refutation, that the argument resulting from the completion of Prophecy, is one that is continually increasing in force; while they are often as ready to admit, that the argument from Miracles diminishes in proportion as we recede farther from the Apostolic times. I hope, my friend, to be able to convince you, in the course of the present letter, that this is a concession which need not be made: but that *we* have as good reason to believe the miraculous facts of Scripture, as any except eyewitnesses, or those who received their information immediately from the lips of eyewitnesses.

The evidence flowing from the performance of miracles, is indeed so summary and convincing, that it may be stated satisfactorily in very few words: for this reason, however, as it should seem, it has been selected by ingenious unbelievers to exercise their dexterity and acumen upon; and thus it becomes requisite to discuss this branch of our subject with a minuteness and comparative prolixity which might, otherwise, have been altogether avoided.

By *miracles* I do not mean "juggling tricks," but supernatural events. This genuine notion of miracles has been sometimes obscured by definition; yet a candid inquirer after truth cannot well mistake. Most of the opinions entertained by men of good sense, apart from any controversial views as to this topic, are correct. *No* man would think that curing lameness, by a regular surgical or medical process, was miraculous: *every* man would say that the instantaneous production of a limb, and "making the maimed whole," was miraculous. And this exactly reaches the logical scientific notion of miracles: for, when such effects are

produced as *(cæteris paribus)* are usually produced, God is said to operate *according to the common course of nature:* but when such effects are produced as are *(cæt. par.) contrary to,* or *different from,* that common course, they are said to be MIRACULOUS."

Now no man will presume to affirm that it is *impossible* a teacher should be sent from God. It may be *necessary* that one should be sent; and I think the train of observation and deduction of facts in my second and third letter, establish that necessity. If one or more be sent, they must bring *credentials* to evince that their mission is divine; and what can those credentials be but *miracles?* In fact, the very idea of a revelation includes that of miracles. A revelation *cannot* be made but by a miraculous interposition of Deity: so that the probability of a revelation implies a correspondent probability of the occurrence of miracles; and the necessity of a revelation, a like necessity of miracles. Nay, I may venture to affirm, farther, that there is a mutual and necessary correlation between the two: for, as on the one hand, miracles (or prophecies, which are in fact miraculous, being contrary to the course of nature) are necessary to prove the divine authority of an agent; so, on the other hand, the performance of uncontrolled miracles, or the delivery of true predictions, immediately suggests to the mind the conviction that they have been permitted solely for the purpose of proving that the person by whom they are performed, is employed by God to do something, or reveal something, which mankind would not have known in any other way.

It is, one would suppose, almost an intuitive truth, that, when a person performs evident and *uncontrolled* miracles in proof of any doctrine, those who have sufficient evidence of the reality of such miracles ought to admit the doctrine to be true, or from God. At all events, the proposition is easily deduced from a few steps of obvious reasoning; limiting it, as I have done, with Baxter, Barrow, and Chandler, to *uncontrolled* miracles, or those the apparent design of which is not

contradicted either by the *absurdity* of the thing they are intended to prove, or by some equal or greater miracles opposed to them. We thus exclude every thing like juggling from the idea of miracles; and at the same time free ourselves from all consideration of pretended miracles, such as those performed by the Egyptian magicians, with the permission or the performance of which, as they were *controlled*, we have nothing to do. The reasoning from which our proposition flows is simply this: a genuine miracle cannot be performed without an extraordinary divine interposition, either mediate or immediate. If the Supreme Being would confirm the truth of a proposition to one man, by the testimony of another to whom it was immediately revealed, we can conceive no method by which it would be so effectually accomplished, as by conferring on him power to work a miracle in confirmation of it. When a miracle is *uncontrolled*, we can conjecture no particular by which it can be distinguished from a miracle wrought to confirm a truth. If God were to suffer an uncontrolled miracle to be wrought in confirmation of a falsehood, there would seem to be no criterion by which his testimony could be distinguished. It is inconsistent with the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God, to suffer an *uncontrolled* miracle to be wrought to establish a falsehood; since it would leave his creatures in a perpetual uncertainty, and an uncertainty that would be most painful to the most *virtuous*, who have always most wished for a revelation. Since, therefore, God is both wise and good, it follows that a proposition attested by uncontrolled miracles is attested by him, and is of necessity true.

From this reasoning it is natural to expect, that in the Scripture History there should be recorded many miracles; and thus, on examining the sacred volume, are our expectations realized. The faith of Moses was confirmed by the miracle of the burning, yet unconsumed, bush. Moses convinced the children of Israel that God employed him to lead them out of Egypt, by

performing miracles by means of his rod: he appealed to similar miracles before Pharaoh for the same purpose: the passage through the Red Sea, which opened to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians, who were afterwards swallowed up in the collapsing waters, was miraculous: the gushing of waters from a solid rock, on its being struck by Moses, was miraculous: the passage of the river Jordan under Joshua, the standing still of the sun and moon at his command, and the falling of the walls of Jericho, were miraculous: the sacrifice kindled by fire from heaven; the raising of the Shunamite's and of the widow of Sarepta's sons; the destruction of the captains and their fifties by fire from heaven; the dividing of the waters of Jordan by means of the mantle of Elijah, and the translation of that prophet, are events of the same class; and so are those recorded in Daniel, respecting the fiery furnace and the den of lions. From the numerous New Testament miracles, beginning with that wrought at the marriage at Cana, I cannot attempt to make an adequate selection. Though it may be proper to remark, that those performed by Jesus Christ differed essentially from others: Moses could not work miracles without his rod; the Apostles performed theirs for the most part expressly, and always *virtually*, "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth:" the Messiah exerted miraculous power from *himself*, without any reference to another. And, farther, the miracles of Jesus Christ were uniformly benevolent:—he cured the sick,—he healed the lame, he made the maimed whole,—he made the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the dumb to speak,—he raised the dead, and finally he raised *himself*; thus evincing at once the greatest miracle, and the sublimest act of benevolence; for, as he "died for our sins," so he "rose again for our justification." So numerous, indeed, and so beneficial were his miracles, that "the multitude were astonished, saying, It was *never* seen so in Israel;" and well might their astonishment be excited, as our Lord wrought more benevolent miracles in *one* after-

noon[1], than had been performed by any of the prophets in all their lives.

That one great object, kept in view by Christ and his Apostles in performing miracles, was to furnish awakening and convincing proofs of their divine mission, is evident from the uniform tenor of the New Testament Histories. The language of the Jewish Ruler was the pure unadulterated language of common sense, the force of which all the sophistry in the world cannot weaken: "Rabbi, we *know* that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, *except God be with him*[2]." The Chief Priests and the Pharisees had the same conviction; for, said they, after Lazarus was raised from the dead, "This man doeth *many* miracles: if we let him alone, *all* will believe on him[3]." Jesus Christ himself appeals to his miracles: "I have greater witness (says he) than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the *works that I do*, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me[4]." And again, when the Jews asked him, If thou be the Christ tell us plainly. How long dost thou make us to doubt? Jesus answered them, "*The works that I do*, they bear witness of me. If I do not the works of *my Father*, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin[5]." And on another occasion, when John sent his disciples to Christ to ask, "Art thou HE that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them[6]." In like manner, with

[1] See Matt. ix. 18—34
[2] John, iii. 2.
[3] John, xi. 47, 48
[4] John, v. 36.
[5] John, x. 24, 25. 37, 38; xv. 24.
[6] Matt. xi. 3, 4, 5.

regard to the Apostles, "God also bare them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will[7]."

Consistently with this, the early Christian writers and apologists, in all those cases where they do not assume the *history* as true, and thence argue that Jesus ought to be received as the Messiah, appeal in very express terms to his miracles. Thus QUADRATUS appeals very strongly to those miracles. JUSTIN MARTYR asserts the performance of miracles by Jesus in as forcible words as language will admit, and assigns the reason why he rather had recourse to the argument from *prophecy*, than that from *miracles*; viz. that his opponents would ascribe the latter to magic. IRENÆUS, LACTANTIUS, TERTULLIAN, ORIGEN, AUGUSTIN, and JEROME speak of Christ's miracles (and often, indeed, of those wrought subsequently to the Apostolic times), and notice the same evasion on the part of the adversaries to Christianity.

It is highly worthy of remark, too, that none of the *early* opposers of the religion of Jesus pretend to dispute that he performed miracles. LUCIAN, JULIAN, PORPHYRY, HIEROCLES, CELSUS, &c. admit that miracles were wrought. Julian, it is true, endeavours to make light of them, and wonders that so much stir should be made about a person, who merely "opened the eyes of the blind, restored limbs to the lame, and delivered persons possessed." Celsus, again, ridicules the miracles, but never disputes that they occurred. "Well (said he), suppose that you really did those things that ye talk of; pray must we deem the persons who perform such wonderful operations to be sons of God; or must we not rather deem them vile wretches, well versed in a diabolical art?" Now, who can imagine for a moment, that so violent an opposer of Christianity would have admitted the miracles of Christ as real facts, had he not been compelled to it by the uni-

[7] Heb. ii. 4. See also Acts, xiv. 9; x. 38, 39, &c.

versal consent of all inquiring men of the age in which he lived? Hence it may be asked (with Mr. F. Cunningham), "whether modern infidels who have ventured to contradict the miracles of Christ, a weapon Celsus was afraid to take up, have estimated the rashness of their enterprise? Are they competent to deny what a spectator no less malevolent than themselves was compelled to admit? Has the lapse of eighteen hundred years enabled them to ascertain a fact of daily occurrence with more accuracy than a by-stander? Are objects best seen at the greatest distance?"

Thus it appears, that we have the most marked and direct testimony of the friends of Revealed Religion (those, too, who had been converted from heathenism by the weight of its evidence), and the concessions of its enemies, in favour of those miracles, which were performed in order to prove that the religion came from God; and this testimony, and these concessions, were delivered so near the period in which the miracles were supposed to have been wrought, that they cannot be accounted for in any other way than by admitting that both Christians and unbelievers, in the early ages, were convinced that something which required more than human energy had occurred. Why, then, should this be disputed in these remote ages?

Voltaire and Mr. Hume will answer this question, by telling us in effect, though not in express words, "that since miracles are not wrought now, they never were wrought at all."

The substance of Mr. Hume's argument (which I describe, because almost all later Deists have echoed his sentiments) is this: "Experience, which in some things is variable, in others is uniform, is our *only* guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact. Variable experience gives rise to probability only; a uniform experience amounts to proof. Our belief of any fact, from the testimony of eyewitnesses, is derived from no other principle than our experience of the veracity of human testimony. If the fact attested be miraculous,

there arises a contest of two opposite experiences, or proof against proof. Now, a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as complete as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined; and if so, it is an undeniable consequence, that it cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever derived from human testimony[8]."

Now, to this reasoning, or the most prominent and essential parts of it, several decisive answers have been, or may be, given. A few of these may properly find a place here.

I. Dr. Campbell, in his celebrated "Dissertation on Miracles," shows the fallacy of Mr. Hume's argument thus: "The evidence arising from human testimony is *not solely* derived from experience: on the contrary, testimony has a natural influence on belief, antecedent to experience. The early and unlimited assent given to testimony by children, gradually contracts as they advance in life: it is, therefore, more consonant to truth to say, that our *diffidence* in testimony is the result of experience, than that our *faith* in it has this foundation. Besides, the uniformity of experience in favour of any fact is not a proof against its being reversed in a particular instance. The evidence arising from the single testimony of a man of known veracity will go farther to establish a belief of its being actually reversed. If his testimony be confirmed by a few others of the same character, we *cannot* withhold our assent to the truth of it. Now, though the operations of nature are governed by uniform laws, and though we have not the testimony of our senses in favour of any *violation* of them; still if, in particular instances, we have the testimony of thousands of our fellow-creatures, and, those, too, men of strict integrity, swayed by no motives of ambition or interest, and governed by the principles of common sense, that they were actually

[8] Encyclopædia Britannica, art. *Abridgment.*

witnesses of these violations, the constitution of our nature obliges us to believe them[9]."

II. Mr. Hume's reasoning is founded upon too limited a view of the laws and course of nature. If we consider things duly, we shall find that lifeless matter is utterly incapable of obeying any laws, or of being endued with any powers: and, therefore, what is usually called *the course of nature* can be nothing else than the arbitrary will and pleasure of God, acting continually upon matter according to certain rules of uniformity, still bearing a relation to contingencies. So that it is as easy for the Supreme Being to alter what men think the course of nature, as to preserve it. Those effects, which are produced in the world regularly and *indesinently*, and which are usually termed the works of nature, prove the constant Providence of Deity; those, on the contrary, which, upon any extraordinary occasion, are produced in such a manner as it is manifest could not have been either by human power, or by what is called chance, prove undeniably the immediate interposition of the Deity on that especial occasion. God, it must be recollected, is the governor of the *moral* as well as of the *physical* world; and since the moral well-being of the universe is of more consequence than its physical order and regularity, it follows, obviously, that the laws, conformably with which the material world seems generally to be regulated, are subservient, and may occasionally yield, to the laws by which the moral world is governed. Although, therefore, a miracle is contrary to the usual *course* of nature (and would indeed lose its beneficial effect, if it were not so), it cannot thence be inferred that it is "a violation of the *laws* of nature," allowing the term to include a regard to *moral* tendencies. The laws by which a wise and holy God governs the world, cannot, unless he is pleased to reveal them, be learned in any other way than from *testimony*; since, on this supposition, nothing but testimony can bring us acquainted with the whole series of his dis-

[9] Encyclopædia Britannica, art. *Abridgment.*

pensations, and this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary previously to our correctly inferring those laws. Testimony, therefore, must be admitted as constituting the principal means of discovering the real laws by which the universe has been regulated; that testimony assures us, that the *apparent* course of nature has often been interrupted to produce important moral effects: and we must not at random disregard such testimony, because, in estimating its credibility, we ought to look almost infinitely more at the moral, than at the physical, circumstances connected with any particular event[10].

III. But the defence of miracles against the objections of infidels need not be thrown wholly upon these general and abstract reasonings, satisfactory and cogent as they are. The miracles recorded in Scripture, and especially those performed by Moses, by Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, are accompanied by evidence such as you will find it difficult to adduce in support of any other historic fact, and such as cannot possibly be brought in support of any pretended fact whatever; evidence, such as the pretended miracles of Mahometanism, and those of the Romish church, are totally destitute of.

The truth of a matter of fact may be positively inferred and known, if it be attended by certain criteria, such as no pretended fact can possibly have. These criteria are at least *four*. It is required, first, that the fact be a *sensible* fact, such as men's outward senses can judge of: secondly, that it be *notorious*, performed publicly in the presence of witnesses: thirdly, that there be *memorials* of it, or monuments, actions, and customs, kept up in commemoration of it: fourthly, that such monuments and actions commence with the fact[11]. There may be facts in favour of which these

[10] This argument is pursued to a considerable extent by the late Professor Vince, in his "Sermons on the Credibility of Miracles, preached before the University of Cambridge."

[11] These criteria were first proposed as decisive in favour of the

four marks cannot be produced; but the argument of Leslie, and St. Real, is, that whatever has all these four marks *cannot* be false[12].

For example, could Moses have persuaded six hundred thousand men that he had led them through the Red Sea in the manner related in Exodus, or have instituted the passover in commemoration of the destruction of the Egyptian first-born, if these circumstances had never occurred? Could he make the Israelites *fancy* that they were fed miraculously with manna forty years in the wilderness, or that, during all that period, their "raiment waxed not old, neither did their feet swell[13]," unless those things, however extraordinary, were facts? Here our four criteria apply. The first two secure from any cheat or imposture, at the time the facts occurred, and the last two preserve equally against any imposition in after ages; because the authors of the book in which these facts are related, speak of it as written at that time by the actors or eyewitnesses, and as commanded by God to be carefully kept and preserved to all generations, and read publicly to all the

Scripture Miracles about 1697, by Mr. Charles Leslie, in his admirable and unanswerable book, "A Short and Easy Method with the Deists" (from which I select the instances given in this section), and by the Abbé St. Real. It is of no consequence to the argument, to determine whether these authors invented it independently of each other, or borrowed it one from the other; but it is important to remark, on the authority of the late very able Mr. Jones, of Nayland, that *Dr. Conyers Middleton*, feeling how necessary it was to his principles that he should find some way of getting over Mr. Leslie's arguments, looked out assiduously, for twenty years together, to find some pretended fact to which these four criteria could be applied, but *without success*. Dr. Middleton died a Deist notwithstanding! Alas! is this the conduct of one who professed to yield to *nothing but* reason? or of one, who, through some strange fatality, "loved darkness rather than light?"

[12] The miracles of Scripture have two additional tests, upon which, however, no stress is laid in this argumentation. They have an important end, worthy of their author: and they are independent of second causes.

[13] Deut. viii. 4; xxix. 5.

people at stated times[14]. And farther, the institutions appointed in this book were to be perpetually observed from the day of each institution for ever among these people, in memory of the miraculous facts. Now, suppose this book to have been forged a hundred or a thousand years after the time of Moses; would not every one say when it first appeared, "We never heard of this book before; we know of no such institutions, as of a passover, or circumcision, or sabbaths, and the many feasts and fasts therein appointed; we know nothing of a tribe of Levi, or of a tabernacle in which they were to serve in such an order of priesthood: this book *must* be an arrant forgery, for it is destitute of all those marks which it gives of itself, as to its own continuance, and of those institutions which it relates." No instance can be shown since the world began of any book so substantiated that was a forgery, and yet passed off, as exhibiting truth, upon any people.

Mr. Leslie, however, does not stop here, but adds a *fifth* mark as peculiar to the Bible, distinguishing it from all other histories, relating facts that formerly occurred: that is, that the book, in which the facts are related, contains likewise the *law* of that people to whom it belongs, and is their statute-book by which their causes are determined. This will render it impossible for any one to forge such a book, so as to make it pass as authentic among any people. If, for example, a person should forge a statute-book for England, and publish it next term, could he make all the judges, lawyers, and people believe that this was their genuine and only statute-book by which their causes had been determined for centuries past? They must forget their old statute-book, and believe that this new book, which they never saw or heard of before, was the very book which had been referred to in the pleadings in Westminster-hall for so many ages, which had been so often printed, and of which the originals

14 Deut. xxxi. 10, 11, 12. Josh. viii. 34, 35. Neh. viii.

are now kept in the Tower, to be consulted, as there is occasion. Thus it is that the books of Moses contain, not only the history of the Jews, but also their municipal law, as well civil as ecclesiastical: and thus, also, it is with respect to the New Testament, which is the spiritual and ecclesiastical law to the Christian church in all nations; and which cannot, therefore, be corrupted, unless all persons in all nations whithersoever Christianity is spread, should conspire in the corruption of the Gospel.

Mr. Leslie selects some striking, though familiar, examples in illustration of his general argument; among others, he adverts to the *Stonehenge* on Salisbury Plain, and compares it with the stones set up at *Gilgal*. Every one, as he observes, knows this Stonehenge, or has heard of it; and yet none know the reason why those great stones were set there, or by whom, or in memory of what. Now, suppose a person should publish a book to-morrow, and therein affirm that these stones were set up by Hercules, Polyphemus, or Garagantua, in memory of such and such of his actions: if he merely make the affirmation, some few may *perhaps* give him credit. But if, for farther confirmation of his assertion, he should say in this book, that it was written at the time when such actions were performed, and by the very actors themselves, or by eyewitnesses: and that this book had been received as true, and quoted by authors of the greatest reputation in all ages since; moreover, that this book was well known in England, and enjoined by act of parliament to be taught our children; and that in consequence we *did* teach it our children, and had been taught it ourselves when we were children; it would seem impertinent to ask any Deist whether he thinks such a delusion could be passed upon the people of England.

Let us now compare this with the Stonehenge, as we may call it, or twelve great stones set up at Gilgal; and erected in order that when the children of the Israelites in after ages should inquire their meaning,

it should be told them[15]. The occurrence, in commemoration of which these stones at Gilgal were set up, is as wonderful and miraculous as the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, and does not admit of the puerile carpings which have been raised by unbelievers against that remarkable event. Notice of this miraculous passage over the Jordan at Gilgal was given to the people on the preceding day[16]. It took place at *noonday* before the *whole nation*. And when the waters of the Jordan were divided, it was not at any low ebb, but at the time when the river overflowed its banks[17]. It was effected, too, not by winds, nor in length of time, which winds would require to accomplish it; but suddenly, as soon as the "feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, then the waters which came from above stood, and rose up upon an heap: and they that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt-sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan. And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lift up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned into their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before. And the people came out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones, which the twelve men (from every tribe a man) took out of the midst of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord

[15] Josh. iv. 6, 7. [16] Josh. iii. 5. [17] Josh. iii. 15.

your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us until we were gone over: that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever[18]."

Now to frame our argument, let it be supposed that there never was any such occurrence as that passage over Jordan; that these stones at Gilgal were set up on some other occasion, in some after age; and then that some designing man invented this book of Joshua, and pretended that it was written by Joshua at this time; adducing this erection of stones at Gilgal as a testimony of the truth of it. Would not the Israelites say to him, "We know the stonage at Gilgal, but we never before heard this reason assigned for it: nor of this book of Joshua. Where has it been all this while? and where, and how came you, after so many ages, to find it? Besides, we are told in this book, that this same passage over Jordan was ordained to be taught our children, from age to age; and therefore that they were always to be instructed in the meaning of that stonage at Gilgal, as a memorial of it. But we were never taught it when we were children; nor did we ever teach our children any such thing. And it is not at all likely *that* could have been forgotten, while so remarkable a stonage continued, which was set up for that and no other purpose."

If, then, for the reasons before assigned, no such imposition could be practised successfully upon us as to the Stonehenge upon Salisbury Plain, how much less could it be with regard to the erection at Gilgal?

And farther, if, when we know not the reason of an insulated monument, such a delusive reason cannot be imposed; how much more impossible is it to impose on us in actions and observances which we celebrate in memory of particular miraculous events! How impossible to make us forget those passages which we

[18] Josh. iii. 15—17; iv. 18—24.

daily commemorate; and to persuade us that we had always observed such institutions or ceremonies in memory of what we never before heard of; that is, that we knew it before we knew it! And if it be found thus impossible to practise an imposition upon us, even in some things which have not all the four criteria before-mentioned, how much more impossible is it that there should be any deceit with regard to particulars in which all those criteria actually meet.

Similar reasoning is applied with equal success by this acute writer to the principal facts, including the miraculous ones, recorded in the Evangelical history. The works and the miracles of Jesus Christ are said, by the Evangelists, to be done *publicly* in the face of the world; and so, indeed, himself affirmed in reasoning with his accusers: "I spake *openly* to the world, and in secret have I said nothing[19]." We learn also in the Acts of the Apostles, that three thousand at one time, and more than two thousand at another[20], were converted, upon conviction of what themselves had seen and known, what had been done publicly before their eyes, and in particulars respecting which it was impossible to impose upon them. So that here we find the two first of Mr. Leslie's criteria.

Then for the two second: Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these things: they were not instituted in after ages, but at the very time when the circumstances to which they relate took place; and they have been observed without interruption, through the whole Christian world, in all ages down from that time to the present. Besides, Christ himself ordained apostles, and other ministers of his Gospel, to preach and administer the sacraments: and that *always* "even unto the end of the world[21]." Accordingly, they have continued by regular succession to this day. So that the Christian ministry is,

[19] John, xviii. 20. See on this point, Horne on the Study of the Scriptures, vol. i. p. 541, 1st edit.

[20] Acts, ii. 41; iv. 4.

[21] Matt. xxviii. 20.

and always has been, as notorious in point of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews. The Gospel also is as much a law, a rule of conduct to the Christians, as the books of Moses to the Jews: and it being part of the matters of fact or truths related in the Gospel, that "pastors and teachers[22]" were appointed by Christ, and to continue till the end of the world; consequently if the Gospel history and doctrines were invented (as they must be, if forged at all) in some ages after Christ; then, at the time of the invention, there could be no such order of clergy or ministers as derived themselves from the institution of Christ; a circumstance which must give the lie to the Gospel, and demonstrate the whole to be false. The miraculous actions of Christ and his Apostles being affirmed to be true no otherwise than as there were, at that identical time (whenever the Deist will suppose the Gospel history to be forged), not only sacraments or ordinances of Christ's institution, but an order of Christian pastors, &c. to administer them; and it being impossible there could be any such things before they were invented, it is as impossible they should be received and accredited when invented. Hence it follows that it was as impossible to have imposed these miraculous relations upon mankind in after ages, as it would have been to make persons believe they saw the miracles, or were parties concerned in the beneficial effects resulting from them, if they were not.

IV. Notwithstanding all that has been said, however, by Leslie and others, since there is no raising a fence sufficiently high to keep out extravagant conjectures and surmises, we find unbelievers exclaiming after all, that still men's senses might be imposed upon. To reasoning we may always oppose reasoning; and it is often perfectly legitimate to oppose conjecture to conjecture; yet, with regard to the New Testament miracles, we cannot have so ill an opinion of the intellects of infidels as to conjecture that they really believe—

[22] Ephes. iv. 11.

"That persons afflicted with the most excruciating maladies and diseases should be juggled into perfect ease and health, and cured (as Celsus pretended) by legerdemain:

"That blind men should see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, lepers be cleansed, and dead men come to life, merely by the play of fancy, and the force of imagination:

"That the senses of whole multitudes should be imposed upon to such a degree that they should all fancy together, they saw, heard, spake, ate and drank, repeated these actions many times over, and that in different places and circumstances, too, and yet, after all, did nothing of all this; but were either asleep, or in ecstasy, or under the influence of some strange charm all the while:

"That five thousand men, for example, at one time, and four thousand at another (besides women and children), should persuade themselves they fed only upon a few loaves and fishes; should publish it to all the country that they did so; refer to time, place, and persons present; and yet, instead of this, have been in fact at a splendid and magnificent feast, where plenty and variety of all provisions, fit to entertain such multitudes, were set before them."

If these things may be, of what utility are our senses? What dependence can be placed upon them? or what credit can be due to a Deist who attests nothing but upon *experience*, and yet admits that *thousands* together may be deceived in reference to some of the most common and frequent actions and functions in human life?

In truth, there are but four hypotheses that can be assumed with respect to the miracles of Jesus Christ, one or other of which a reasonable being must adopt.

Either, first, the recorded accounts of those miracles were absolute fictions wickedly invented by some persons who had a wish to impose upon mankind:

Or, secondly, Jesus Christ did not work any true

miracles; but the senses of the people were in some way or other deluded, so that they believed he really did perform miracles, when in fact he did not:

Or, thirdly, that the spectators were not in any way deluded, but knew very well he wrought no miracles; yet were all (both enemies and friends, the *Jews* themselves not excepted, though they daily "sought occasion against him") united in a close confederacy to persuade the world that he performed the most surprising things. So that, while some actively circulated reports of these amazing occurrences, the rest kept their counsel, never offering to unmask the fraud, but managing the matter with so much cunning and dexterity, and such an exact mutual harmony and correspondence, that the story of Jesus Christ's performing miracles should become current, should obtain almost universal credit, and *not a single person be able to disprove it*:

Or, fourthly, that he did actually perform these astonishing works, and that the accounts given of them by the Christian writers in the New Testament are authentic and correct.

He that does not adopt the last of these conclusions will find it a matter of very small consequence which of the three others he chooses. For that the stories cannot be *fictions* is evident from the reasoning of Leslie already adduced: and it will be seen farther, from a few moments' consideration, that the denial of the miracles of Jesus Christ, in *any* way, leads necessarily to the admission of a series of real miracles of another kind.

The progress of the human mind, as may be seen by all the inquiries into it, is a thing of a determinate nature: a man's thoughts, words, and actions, are all generated by something previous; there is an established course for these things (as well as for the physical part of the universe), an analogy, of which every man is a judge from what he feels in himself, and observes in others: and to suppose any number

of men in determinate circumstances to vary from this general tenour of human nature in like circumstances is a miracle, and may, as Dr. Hartley remarks, be made a miracle of any magnitude, *i. e.* incredible to any degree, by augmenting the number and magnitude of the deviations. It is therefore a miracle in the human *mind*, as great as any that can possibly be conceived to take place with regard to the *body*, to suppose that multitudes of Christians, Jews, and Heathens, in the primitive times, should have borne such unquestionable testimony, some expressly, others by indirect circumstances, as we learn from history they did, to the miracles said to be performed by our Lord upon the human body, unless they were really performed. In like manner, the reception which the miracles recorded in the Old Testament met with is a miracle, unless those miracles were true. These are not, however, the only miracles which unbelievers in the Scripture miracles must admit. The very determination of the apostles to propagate the belief of false miracles (independent of the additional difficulty arising from the silent concurrence of the Jews and Gentiles in the story, according to the *third* hypothesis suggested above), in support of such a religion as that taught in the New Testament, is as great a miracle as human imagination can conceive. For when they formed this design, whether they hoped to succeed, or conjectured that they should fail, in their undertaking, they chose what they *knew* to be *moral evil*, with the contingency of experiencing *natural evil;* nay, so desirous were they to obtain nothing but *misery*, that they made their own persecution a test of the truth of their doctrines;—thus violating the strongest possible of all laws of human nature, namely, that "no man *can* choose evil for its *own sake*."

Here, then, an unbeliever must either deny all analogy, association, uniformity of action, operation of motives, selection of good in preference to evil, &c. and become an absolute sceptic in the most extensive

acceptation of the term, or acknowledge that very strong physical analogies may sometimes be violated; that is, he must have recourse to something miraculous in order that he may get quit of something miraculous Let him next inquire which of the two opposite classes of miracles will agree best with his other notions: whether it be more analogous to the nature of God, the course of providence, the history of the world, the known progress of man in this life, &c. to allow that God imparted to certain select persons, of eminent piety, the power of working miracles; or to suppose that he confounded the understandings, affections, and whole train of associations, of thousands of persons, nay, of entire nations, in such a manner that men, who in all other things seemed to have acted like other men, should, in respect of the history of Jesus Christ, the Prophets or the Apostles, abandon all established rules of thinking and acting, and conduct themselves in a way miraculously repugnant to all our ideas and all our experience. In order to determine this inquiry, let it not be forgotten that the object, of the class of miracles against which the Deists contend, is *worthy* of a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness: while the object of the latter is decidedly and absolutely inconsistent with wisdom and goodness, attributes which all Theists ascribe to that Great Being by whom alone miracles can be performed, allowing that they can be wrought at all.

V. Much of the preceding reasoning is entirely independent of any minute investigation of the nature of concurrent or successive testimony; and the whole discussion might safely be terminated without any reference to these abstruser inquiries, were it not that Hume and his disciples have frequently adverted to them, and that silence might be construed into inability to break through their web of sophistry. The argument of Dr. Campbell has already been briefly sketched; I shall here add a few distinct considerations. And, first, with regard to *concurrent* testimony, it has been

demonstrated upon genuine mathematical principles[23], that where the credibility of each witness is great, a very few witnesses will be sufficient to overcome any contrary probability, derived from the nature of the fact; that the evidence resulting from testimony can not only approach indefinitely near to certainty, but can at length exceed the evidence of any inference, however cogent, which can possibly be deduced from personal experience, or from personal and derived experience conjointly; that is, that the evidence of testimony can overcome any degree of improbability, however great, which can arise from the nature of the fact. The reason is, that the evidence of testimony admitting of an unlimited increase on two different accounts (namely, that of the *veracity* of the witnesses, and that of the *number* of concurrent witnesses), while the probability of the happening of any specific event admits only one of them, the former is capable of indefinitely surpassing the latter.

But, indeed, the force of the evidence resulting from concurrent testimony is avowedly so great upon the minds of all who have not been biased by the perusal of deistical speculations, or an indulgence in them, that the matter scarcely needs the support of mathematical investigation. Let it be supposed that twelve men of probity and good sense were circumstantially and seriously to tell, each independently of the others, on his own personal conviction, "a round unvarnished tale" of a miracle performed before their eyes, and respecting which it was impossible (as they affirm) for them to be deceived; I believe few persons would wait to receive a thirteenth concurrent testimony, before they yielded their assent to the truth of the relation, however extraordinary. Let it be supposed, farther, that the twelve

23 See the article *Credibility* in the PANTOLOGIA; see also Mr. Somerville's valuable "Remarks on an Article in the Edinburgh Review, in which the Doctrine of Hume is maintained," Edin. 1815; and Edmonds's Introduction to the last edition of Leland's Deistical Writers.

evidences, on being suspected of "bearing false witness," subjected themselves to be scourged, tortured, nay strangled, rather than deny the truth of their attestation; could any reasonable or reasoning man refuse to believe their testimony? According to Mr. Hume's argumentation, we are not to believe them, were we to hear such a story and witness such sufferings; but I am so persuaded that no person in his senses would *disbelieve* them, that I will venture to say even Mr. Hume, under such circumstances, could not have withheld his assent to the truth of their story.

"But," say his disciples, "whatever might be done or conceded in such a case, those who live a thousand years after the event can have no reason to believe it: if we admit that *concurrent* testimony may augment, still *successive* testimony diminishes, and that so rapidly as to command no assent, after a few centuries at most." This is specious; but, as I remarked at the commencement of this letter, far from correct. I do not deny that there may be cases in which credibility diminishes with time; but no testimony is really, in the nature of things, rendered less credible by any other cause, than the loss or want of some of those conditions which first made it rationally credible. A testimony continues *equally* credible, so long as it is transmitted with all those circumstances and conditions which first procured it a certain degree of credit amongst men, proportionate to the intrinsic value of those conditions. Let it be supposed that the persons who transmit the testimony are able, honest, and diligent, in all the requisite inquiries as to what they transmit, and how should the credibility due to their testimony be weakened, but by the omission of circumstances? which omission is contrary to the hypothesis. No calculation of the decrease of the credibility of testimony, in which a man bears witness respecting realities, and not the fictions of his own brain, can ever proceed upon any other principle than that of the characters and qualifications of the witnesses: and therefore, so far as the credibility of any matter of fact depends upon pure testimony, they

who live at the remotest distances of time may have the same evidence of the truth of it as those persons who lived nearest to the time in which the thing was said to be done; that identical time being, of course, excluded.

In what possible manner, for example, can the evidence on which *we* believe the facts related in the Gospels be less than that on which those facts were accredited by Christians in the second or third centuries? They possessed the standard writings of the Evangelists; so do we: what those books then contained, they now contain; and the invention of printing seems likely, under the care of Providence, to preserve them genuine to the end of time. This admirable invention has so far secured all considerable monuments of antiquity, that no ordinary calamities of wars, dissolutions of governments, &c. can destroy any material evidence now in existence, or render it less probable to those who shall live in a thousand years' time than it is to us. With regard to the facts of the Christian religion, indeed, it is notorious that our evidence in favour of them has *increased* instead of diminished since the era of printing, the reformation of religion, and the restoration of letters: and, as even the *recent* inquiries of learned men[24] have produced fresh evidence, there is every reason to hope it will continue to increase.

Indeed, it is only with regard to the facts related in the Bible that men ever talk of the daily diminution of credibility. Who complains of a decay of evidence in relation to the actions of Alexander, Hannibal, Pompey, or Cæsar? How many fewer of the events recorded by Plutarch, or Polybius, or Livy, are believed now (on account of a diminution of evidence) than were believed by Mr. Addison, or Lord Clarendon, or Geoffrey Chaucer? It might be contended, with some semblance of probability, that we know *more* of those ancients than the persons now mentioned: but that widely different from accrediting *less*. We never hear persons wishing that they had lived ages earlier,

[24] See the close of Letter V.

that they might have had better proofs that Cyrus was the conqueror of Babylon, that Darius was beaten in several battles by Alexander, that Titus destroyed Jerusalem, that Hannibal was entirely routed by Scipio, or Pompey by Julius Cæsar: though we sometimes find men of ardent and enterprising minds exclaiming, "O that I had lived and been present when such and such splendid events occurred: how lively an interest should I have taken in such scenes, how much concern in their termination!" And, indeed, it is the frequent hearing of like exclamations that causes men to confound weight of testimony with warmth or depth of feeling; and to lose sight of the essential difference between real evidence, or the true basis for belief of history, and the sensible impression or influence which such history may make upon the mind. We believe as firmly that Lucretius stabbed himself in the delirium of a fever, as that Lucretia stabbed herself in consequence of the wrongs she had received from Tarquin's son; yet we feel a much more lively interest in the latter event than in the former. The fate of Carthage, or the result of the contest between Antony and Octavius respecting the empire of the world, would doubtless be much more deeply felt, and much more warmly conversed about, within two centuries of the circumstances, than they ever are now: yet those who then conversed about them had just as much reason to doubt their occurrence as we have; that is, just none at all. Similar reasoning will apply to all the circumstances recorded in authentic history. So that, having established the genuineness and authenticity of the books of Scripture, on evidence far superior to that on which other historic books are received, it is the most idle and ridiculous thing imaginable to affect to disbelieve any of the facts therein recorded, on account of the remoteness of the times in which they occurred.

Let me now attempt to collect the scattered arguments in this letter, with a few additional suggestions, to one point, and conclude. If, then, we have found,

upon careful examination, that the miraculous facts proposed for our belief, and on the credit of which the divine authority of a particular system of doctrines and precepts depends, are,—1. Such as do not imply a self-contradiction in them. 2. If they appear to have been performed publicly, in the view of several people, and with a professed intention to establish the divine authority of the person or persons who wrought them. 3. If they were many in number, frequently repeated, and continued for a series of years together. 4. If they were of an interesting nature in themselves, likely to make strong impressions upon the minds of all who saw and heard of them; and for that reason, probably, much attended to, talked of, and examined, at the time of their performance. 5. If the effects produced by them were not transient, but lasting, such as, however instantaneous the change might be, must have existed for many years, and were capable all the while of being disproved if they were not real. 6. If the relations were committed to writing at or very near the time when the facts are said to have occurred, and by persons of unimpeachable integrity, who tell us, that "that which they have seen and heard, the same declare they unto us;" by persons who, having sufficient opportunity of knowing the whole truth of what they testify, could not possibly be deceived themselves; and who, having no conceivable motive or temptation to falsify their evidence, cannot, with the least shadow of probability, be suspected of an intention to deceive other people. 7. If there be no proof, or even well founded suspicion of proof, that the testimony of those who bear witness to these extraordinary facts was ever contradicted even by such as professed themselves open enemies to their persons, character, and views, though the accounts of the facts were first published upon the spot where they were affirmed to have been originally performed, and amongst persons who were engaged by private interest, and furnished with full authority, inclination, and opportunity, to manifest the

falsity of them, and to detect the imposture, had they been able. 8. If, on the contrary, the existence of these facts be expressly allowed, by the persons who thought themselves most concerned to prevent the genuine consequences which might be deduced from them; and there were, originally, no other disputes about them, than to what sufficient cause they were to be imputed. 9. If, again, the witnesses from whom we have these facts were many in number, all of them unanimous in the substance of their evidence, and all, as may be collected from their whole conduct, men of such unquestionable good sense as secured them against all delusion in themselves; if they were men who evinced the sincerity of their own conviction, by acting under the uniform influence of the extraordinary works to which they bore witness, in direct contradiction to all their former prejudices and most favoured notions; in direct contradiction, also, to every flattering prospect of worldly honour, profit, or advantage (as was remarkably exemplified in the case of St. Paul); and when they could not but be previously assured that "bonds and afflictions awaited them[25];" that ignominy, persecution, misery, and even death itself, most probably would attend the constant and invariable perseverance in their testimony. 10. If these witnesses, in order that their evidence might have the greater weight with a doubting world (each nation being already in possession of a prevailing religion), were themselves enabled to perform such extraordinary works as testified the clear and indisputable interposition of a divine power in favour of their veracity; and, after having experienced the severest afflictions, vexations, and torments, at length laid down their lives in confirmation of the truth of the facts asserted by them. 11. If great multitudes of the contemporaries of these witnesses, men of almost all nations, tempers, professions, and scales of intellect, were persuaded by them that these facts were really performed in the

[25] Acts, xx. 23.

manner related, and gave the strongest testimony which it was in their power to give of the firmness and active tendency of their belief, by immediately breaking through all their previous attachments and connexions of interest or friendship, and acting in express contradiction to them. 12. If concurring testimony, carried to a sufficient extent, and especially of this kind, be in its nature really irresistible; and if successive testimony, under the circumstances of the case before us, rather increase than diminish in credibility. 13. If ceremonies and institutions were grounded upon the miraculous facts, and have been uninterruptedly observed in all the successive periods of time, from the date of the facts in commemoration of which they were established. 14. If we have all the proof which the severest rules of criticism can require, that no alterations have been made in the original writings and records left us by these witnesses in any material article of their evidence since their first publication, either through accident or design; but that they have been transmitted to us in all their genuine purity, as they were left by their authors —In such a situation of things, where so great a variety of circumstances, where, indeed, all imaginable circumstances, mutually concur to confirm, strengthen, and support each other's evidence; without a single argument on the other side, but what arises merely from the extraordinary nature of the facts, and the admission of which inevitably leads to consequences at least as extraordinary as those our opponents are inclined to reject; may not *they* be justly accused of an unreasonable incredulity, who refuse their assent to them? And will not such incredulity be as dangerous as it is ridiculous? If facts, attested in so clear, decisive, and unexceptionable a manner, and delivered down to posterity with so many conspiring signs and monuments of truth, are, nevertheless, not to be believed; it is, I think, impossible for the united wisdom of mankind to point out any evidence of historical events which will justify a wise and cautious man

in accrediting them. Where there is the strongest assurance of the occurrence of any particular series of miraculous facts, which we are capable of acquiring, according to the present frame of our nature, and the state of things in the world: to reject these miracles after all, and the religion in attestation of which they were wrought, and to pretend to exculpate ourselves for not believing them, upon the bare suspicion of a possibility that they *may* be false, is, instead of being an indication of freedom from shackles, and erectness and greatness of mind, a monstrous contradiction to the principles of common sense, and the universal practice of mankind. That you and I, my friend, may be preserved from such a preposterous and dangerous absurdity, is the fervent wish of

Yours sincerely.

LETTER VIII.

On the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

SEVERAL of the facts recorded in the Christian Scriptures have this to distinguish them from others, that they are intimately connected with doctrines; so intimately, indeed, that the doctrine grows out of the fact, and that, consequently, the denial of the fact causes the annihilation of the doctrine, and prevents the springing forth of those happy effects which the doctrine is calculated to produce. Thus the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact; *our* resurrection is a doctrine founded upon that fact. The denial of one requires the renunciation of the other. "If," says Paul, "there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain[1]." And again, "If we believe that Jesus Christ died, and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him[2]." Thus, also, the ascension of Jesus Christ to

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14. [2] 1 Thes. iv. 14.

heaven is a fact; his return from thence to judge the world is a dependent doctrine. Thus spake the angels to the disciples at the ascension of our Lord: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven[3]." "Shall come to be admired in his saints, and to be glorified in all them that believe[4]."

Hence, since the most exalted hopes of a Christian, the most animating doctrines of his religion, have for their basis, the fact of the RESURRECTION of Jesus Christ; it is requisite that his faith in that fact be firmly "rooted and grounded." And, happily, the general evidences in confirmation of so important an event flow from various and satisfactory sources. As from the predictions of Jesus Christ, that at a certain time he should raise himself from the dead. From the fact that, at this precise time, his body was not to be found in the sepulchre, although the most effectual precautions had been taken to prevent its removal. From the positive testimony of *many* that after this time they saw him, conversed with him, the most incredulous touched and felt him, to remove their doubts, and all received from him those instructions on which they acted in promulgating his Gospel. From the clumsy and self-destructive story invented by the Jews in contradiction of this fact[5]. And from the success which attended the preaching and declaring that he was "crucified and *raised from the dead*."

[3] Acts, i. 11.

[4] 2 Thes. i. 10. It may also be observed that so indissoluble is the connexion between one fact and another revealed to us in the New Testament, that the admission of one, by necessity, involves the admission of the rest. Thus, by proving the resurrection of our Lord, you establish,—1. His death and burial. 2. The occasion and benefits of his death. 3. His promise of the Spirit. 4. His ascension. (for, if he did not ascend, what became of him?) 5. His ever living in heaven. 6. The objects which he there incessantly carries on.

This suggests an important train of argument, at which I now merely glance, and leave it to be pursued by others.

[5] Matt. xxviii. 13, 14.

It is not my intention to enlarge upon these various sources of evidence; but merely, assuming (as I may now, I trust, fairly do) the genuineness of the first four books of the New Testament, to describe briefly the leading circumstances of Christ's resurrection, and several appearances previous to his ascension; and then to adduce a few general, though, I hope, unanswerable arguments in favour of this extraordinary event.

The circumstances of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the subsequent appearances, as they may be collected from the accounts of the several Evangelists, have been related, with slight variations, by different authors.* The order I shall adopt appears to me as free from objection, and as little exposed to the cavils of unbelievers, as any I have met with. To render this history the more perspicuous, it may be proper to begin with reminding you, that when Jesus Christ was led to be crucified, a great company of his friends and acquaintance followed, bewailing and lamenting him[6]. Among the rest was his own mother, who, with two more of her name, and the Apostle John, stood so near him, that he could speak to them. While he was nailed to the cross, he consigned his mother to John's care, it appearing that she was then a widow. This beloved disciple, probably, took her immediately to his own home, before the three hours' supernatural darknesss[7], that she might not be there to see him expiring. But the other two women continued there still, as well as many more who stood farther off. When the darkness was over, and our Lord had yielded up his spirit, they were there still; and all of them attended till he was buried[8]. It should seem, also, that the two Marys[9] waited later than the rest, till all was over, and he was laid in the sepulchre[10]. A considerable company of

[6] Luke, xxiii. 27. [7] John, xix. 25—27.

[8] Matt. xxvii. 55, 56. Mark, xv. 40, 41. Luke, xxiii. 49. 55.

[9] Namely, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Cleopas and mother of Matthew, James, Simon, and Jude.

[10] Matt. xxvii. 61. Mark, xv. 47.

the women seem to have agreed to embalm their Lord's body early on the third day; they therefore that evening prepared what time and circumstances would admit, and rested on the sabbath, conformably with the commandment[11].

Not so the priests and pharisees. With all their pretended zeal for the sabbath, they were very busy on that day, consulting, arranging, preparing an address, waiting with it on Pilate, obtaining a guard, sealing the stone, and setting all safe. This was *their* sabbath employment[12]. By the end of the day all was as safe as they could make it. But very early on the following morning, the first day of the week, *i. e.* about the break of day, or a little earlier, an angel descended from heaven, came and rolled back the stone from the entrance of the grave, and sat upon it, regardless of either seal or guard. The keepers or guards were terrified at his appearance, and became as dead men[13]. Recovering themselves a little, however, some of them went to the chief priests, and related what had happened: the chief priests and elders "gave large money to the soldiers," saying, "Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him while we slept[14]."

About the time of the earthquake which occurred on the descent of the angel, the two Marys were preparing to go, very early, to see whether all about the sepulchre was safe, before the rest of the company could go[15]. Either they called on Salome, or met her in their way[16]; and as all three passed on towards the sepulchre, being desirous, probably, to begin to embalm the body before their friends arrived, "they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" All this time they knew nothing of the guard, or of the opening of the grave: but as they came near the sepulchre "at the rising of the sun," they looked forward, "and saw that the stone

[11] Luke xxiii. 56.
[12] Matt. xxvii. 62—66.
[13] Matt. xxviii. 2—4.
[14] Matt. xxviii. 11—13.
[15] Matt. xxviii. 1.
[16] Mark, xvi. 1.

was rolled away; for it was very great[17]." This, as was natural, caused a multiplicity of varying emotions in their minds. Mary Magdalene, being at once warm in her affection, and anxious in her disposition, concluded that the body was stolen; and would therefore go no farther, but hastily ran back to tell Peter and John what she had seen, and what she thought: those two zealous disciples, therefore, hastened thither to ascertain the truth of her relation[18]. But while she ran back, the other Mary and Salome approached nearer to the sepulchre. The angel, who formerly sat on the stone to terrify the guard, had by this time moved into the sepulchre; for Christ rose and went out as soon as the stone was rolled away: and though the women were near enough to see the stone, they could see no angel upon it before Mary Magdalene ran back. Mary and Salome thus advancing, they found no obstruction, and resolved to ascertain whether the body was taken away or not. Just entering, therefore, into the sepulchre, they saw the angel, who invited them farther in, to "behold the place where the Lord had lain." But they were affrighted: so the angel told them "the Lord was risen," directed them to go and inform his disciples, and Peter, and to tell them, moreover, that they should see him in Galilee; as he had assured them previous to his crucifixion[19]. The women, under the joint influence of fear, joy, and amazement, ran away, saying nothing to any one, but fled trembling[20]. They were just gone when Mary Magdalene arrived the second time, with Peter and John, though it was yet early. These two disciples, before they reached the sepulchre, ran quicker than Mary: the angel having now disappeared, the two men went *into* the sepulchre, found the body was not there, but saw the grave-clothes lying folded up, indicating that there had been no indecent haste. John *believed* "the Lord

17 Mark, xvi. 2—4. 18 John, xx. 1—4.
19 Matt. xxviii. 5—7. Mark, xvi. 5—7. Matt. xxvi. 32.
20 Mark, xvi. 8.

was risen:" but they both soon went away home without seeing him. Mary Magdalene now tarried behind, to weep alone, appearing in much doubt as to what had become of the body of Jesus. While in this mournful, anxious state of mind, she stooped down and looked earnestly into the sepulchre, where she saw *two* angels, one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body had lain. They asked why she wept: she replied it was because she had lost her Lord; and as she made the answer, she in haste looked another way and *saw* JESUS; but not knowing him, being half blinded by her apprehensions and her tears, she supposed it was the gardener who cultivated the garden in which the sepulchre was, and therefore said to him, "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Then Jesus made himself known unto her. This therefore was his *first* appearance, after his resurrection, to any of his followers: and it was early[21]. Mary Magdalene departed immediately, "and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken to her." Thus, as some of our old divines have remarked, woman, who was first in the original transgression, was first in proclaiming the fact of the resurrection, and laying the grand corner stone in the Christian edifice.

The other Mary and Salome, full of fear and amazement, had turned aside into some retired place; and needed time to recover themselves before they could carry any tidings. But while they were in this consternation, their compassionate Lord met them, and said, "All hail: be not afraid," proceed cheerfully on, and deliver to my disciples the message you have received from the angel, "that they go into Galilee[22]." This was the *second* appearance of Christ; and it was to *two* women.

These three women and two of the apostles having been at the sepulchre, and Mary the last of them hav-

[21] John xx. 3—18. Mark, xvi. 9, 10.
[22] Matt. xxviii. 9. 10.

ing departed, it being yet early[23]: just as she was gone Joanna came, and a considerable company with her; bringing the spices, &c. in order to embalm the body of Jesus, as they had agreed before the sabbath. They spent no time in reasoning about the removal of the stone, as the others had done; being a sufficient number to effect it, and expecting to meet the other three women at the place: for they knew nothing of what had passed at the sepulchre in the earlier part of the morning, before they arrived. When they got there, they found the stone rolled away: so they went into the sepulchre, and immediately perceived that the body was not there: but when they went in they saw no angel, as Mary and Salome had seen, sitting at the right side[24]; nor did the two angels, who spake to Mary Magdalene, now appear. Joanna and her companions, like the other women, were full of amazement: and while they were in this perplexity, behold two angels stood by them and said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen," &c.[25]. Then the women returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things to the eleven, and to others, who, it seems, were now gathered together, by reason of the report Peter and John had made on their return from the sepulchre an hour or two before. When Peter and John were at the sepulchre, they had seen no angels; nor had they heard any report that Jesus was actually risen; but on Joanna's relating what she had seen and heard, Peter, evincing the ardour which marked all his actions, ran a second time to the sepulchre; and some others either along with him, or soon after him[26]: they all found that the body was not in the grave; but they saw not Jesus.

Soon after this, two of them went a journey as far as Emmaus, about seven and a half miles from Jerusalem. We have no account of any more persons going to the sepulchre. But Peter, soon after the departure of the

[23] Mark, xvi. 9. [24] Mark, xvi. 5.
[25] Luke, xxiv. 1—9. [26] Luke, xxiv. 12, 24.

two disciples for Emmaus, retired to a place alone to meditate upon what had occurred, where his Lord appeared to him. This was the *third* appearance of Christ; but the first[27] to any of his apostles. Jesus, having conversed a little with Peter, left him; and soon coming up with the two disciples who were journeying to Emmaus, conversed with them a good while, and afterwards revealed himself unto them[28]. This was the *fourth* appearance.

While these two disciples were from Jerusalem, those who continued at that city were in great concern; for though Joanna had told them, from the angels, that Jesus was risen, yet her "words were as idle tales." Some time after, Mary Magdalene brought them the tidings that she had "seen the Lord;" she found them mourning and incredulous, notwithstanding the cheering tenor of the news she communicated[29]. The other Mary and Salome likewise conveyed their tidings, as they were directed, first by the angels, and then by Christ himself[30]. Late the same evening Peter came and informed them that he had seen Jesus. And as the disciples were discussing the evidences of his resurrection, some believing, others doubting, the two returned from Emmaus; and while they received, on the one hand, the joyful intelligence "the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon," they in their turn confirmed the account, telling what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread[31];" by this significant act reminding them of his last supper with them, and of the important institution he then established. Still, however, "some of them believed not," though Jesus had now appeared *four* times; first to one woman, then to two; after that to one man, and then to two.

Our Lord's *fifth* appearance after his resurrection was much more public than any of the preceding ones;

[27] 1 Cor. xv. 5. [28] Luke xxiv. 13—31.
[29] Mark, xvi. 10, 11. John, xx. 17, 18.
[30] Matt. xxviii. 7—10. [31] Mark, xvi. 13. Luke, xxiv. 34, 35.

for while they were earnestly conversing upon this most interesting topic, still on the evening of the first day of the week, just after the return of the two from Emmaus, "Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you[32]." Though Thomas was at this time absent, yet there was a considerable number of the disciples gathered together, besides ten of the apostles[33], in order to inquire and learn more about Jesus Christ. Besides this, the guard having said that they had seen an angel at the sepulchre, the Jews were enraged that their precautions to detain the body were defeated, circulated the ridiculous story that it was stolen by the disciples of Jesus while the guards slept, and began to threaten the disciples; they, therefore, being "afraid of the Jews," dare not sleep in their own lodgings, but had assembled together, and shut the door, previously to the appearance of Jesus[34]. His sudden and unexpected appearance and address to them terrified them, so that they thought "it was a spirit," and not their Lord in the same identical body that was crucified and buried. But the Redeemer, to remove their distressing unbelieving thoughts, directed them to behold him steadfastly, to feel and touch him, and observe his lately wounded and pierced hands and feet. Then he ate before them, still farther to confirm their faith; and "opened the Scriptures to them," showing them that "thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day[35]." After that, conversing still farther with them, he gave them another sign of his real existence and life, by *breathing* upon them; of his divine power, by conferring upon them the Holy Spirit; and then departed[36]." Presently after, Thomas came in; but when the disciples told him they had "seen the Lord," consistently with the unbelieving spirit which he seemed usually to manifest, he refused his assent, and replied, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger

[32] Luke, xxiv. 36. [33] Luke, xxiv. 33. [34] John, xx. 19.
[35] Luke, xxiv. 37—48. John, xx. 20. [36] John, xx. 22.

into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, *I will not believe*[37]." Such was the incredulity of this apostle, although Jesus had then been seen at *five* distinct times in the course of that one day.

At the close of the feast of unleavened bread, that is, on the succeeding first day of the week, Jesus again appeared unto the *eleven*, Thomas being with them: he upbraided him for his unbelief, allowed him the tests he wished for, and extorted from him the confession, "My Lord and my God[38]!" On this occasion, which was the *sixth* time of Jesus Christ's appearing, there does not seem to have been much conversation. The appearance was probably for the especial purpose of convincing Thomas.

After this, the feast being now over, the eleven travelled to Galilee, being encouraged by promises, both before and after the resurrection, to expect the sight of their Lord there[39]. The distance was more than eighty miles from Jerusalem to Tiberias, and still more to Bethsaida and Capernaum. Thither, however, they went, inspired by these hopes; and shortly after their arrival there, Jesus appeared again at the sea of Tiberias, or, as it was sometimes called, the sea of Galilee[40]. Here were seven of the disciples, probably of the eleven, following their occupation of fishers; they had been "toiling all night, and caught nothing," when Jesus appeared, whom they knew not at first. In consequence of following his advice, they had a large and miraculous draught of fishes in their net; which was succeeded by a long, familiar, and interesting conversation, related pretty fully by the Apostle John[41], who was one of the disciples present. This was, as John terms it, the *third* time he had appeared to the body of the apostles; but it was his *seventh* appearance since his resurrection.

Probably it was at this familiar interview by the sea

[37] John xx. 25. [38] John xx. 26—29. Mark xvi. 14.
[39] Matt. xxviii. 16 [40] John, vi. 1; xxi. 1.
[41] John xxi. 12—23.

of Tiberias, that Jesus told these seven disciples when and where they might expect to see him in a very public manner, agreeably to the promise made them before his death [42]. And hence probably they gave notice of it privately to as many disciples as might be thought proper; for even then, though he was to appear openly, yet it was not to a great variety, but "to chosen witnesses [43], who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." Pursuant to this previous notice, as it should seem, there was a most numerous and public meeting upon a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus made his *eighth* appearance. Matthew says expressly [44] Jesus had appointed the mountain. The number assembled there was between five and six hundred, called emphatically *brethren* [45], denoting that they were all chosen witnesses, as Peter observed in the house of Cornelius. Here, as he found that "some" still "doubted," he gave infallible proofs of his resurrection, and "spake much of the things concerning the kingdom of God [46];" being now about to take his final farewell of the greatest part of them on earth. It is worthy of observation, that the majority of the witnesses of this appearance were living, and appealed to as such, twenty years afterwards, when Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

The *ninth* appearance of Christ recorded in the Scriptures was to James. This, Paul informs us, was after that to the five hundred [47]. Probably it took place in Galilee, as well as the two last mentioned; but the evangelists give us no particular information about it. Paul, however, refers to it as a fact *well known*; otherwise he would not have adduced it in proof of the resurrection, denied as it was by some, and little understood by many who believed the fact.

The *tenth* and last appearance of the risen Saviour was at Jerusalem, "to all the apostles [48]," that is, to the eleven remaining ones, Judas being "gone to his own

[42] Matt. xxviii. 7, 10. Mark, xvi. 17. [43] Acts, x. 40, 41.
[44] Matt. xxviii. 16, 17. [45] 1 Cor. xv. 6.
[46] Acts, i. 3. [47] 1 Cor. xv. 7. [48] 1 Cor. xv. 7.

place." It was about six weeks after the passover, and about forty days after the resurrection, when several of the disciples from Galilee repaired again to Jerusalem, in order to keep the approaching feast of weeks, called the *Pentecost* by the Grecian Jews. Being assembled together with the disciples at Jerusalem in one house, probably the same as that where Jesus had kept the passover and instituted his supper; and the same in which they met on the day of the resurrection, and on that day week, and where they worshiped till the day of Pentecost[49]; there they had the conversation with their Lord recorded in the first chapter of the Acts[50]. There he gave them commandments, and spake more "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God[51]." There he delivered to them the commission to go forth into all the world to preach, and *baptize* (for baptism, it should be remembered, was not instituted as a *Christian* ordinance till after the resurrection), and gave them animating promises of his presence with them while their life continued, and with their successors in the ministry "to the end of the world[52]." There he commanded them not to depart into Galilee again, but to tarry at Jerusalem till they should "be baptized with the Holy Ghost," which he assured them would be in the course of a few days[53]. This last interview would, doubtless, be very endearing, affecting, and instructive. And, as if to impress the circumstance with all its important lessons, and all its solemn tendencies, more deeply on their minds, he led them out towards Bethany, or *Mount Olivet*, conversing as they went, according to his wonted manner. Often had he retired with his dear and beloved disciples to that secluded spot; and thither he now for the last time conducted them. There, near the place whence he commenced his triumphant ride into Jerusalem—where he had frequently conversed, expounded parables, and prayed with his dis-

49 Acts, i. 13; ii. 1. 50 Acts, i. 6—8. 51 Acts, i. 3.
52 Matt. xxviii. 18—20. Mark, xvi. 15—18.
53 Luke, xxiv. 49. Acts, i. 4, 5, 8.

ciples,—where, in so much agony, he had recently prayed, and sweat as it were "drops of blood,"—where he was betrayed with a kiss, taken by his enemies, and forsaken by his disciples; there he once more assembled them, "lifted up his hands and blessed them:" and "while he blessed them," he was taken up gradually from them into heaven, "a cloud receiving him out of their sight[54]." Thus, then, it appears, from apostolic testimony, that Jesus Christ not only rose from the dead, but rendered himself manifest to *many* after his resurrection, removing the doubts of the incredulous by "the most infallible proofs," and confirming the faith of the weak by the most consoling and cheering promises: promises which speedily after were amply fulfilled[55].

> "Twice twenty days he sojourn'd here on earth,
> And show'd himself alive to chosen witnesses
> By proofs so strong, that the most slow-assenting
> Had not a scruple left. This having done,
> He mounted up to heaven." BLAIR.

Such, in few words, is the history of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and of his various appearances after that important event. I have drawn this account not from the writings of any one evangelist, but from a collection and comparison of their separate stories: for the relations of these four historians, though not discordant, do not each comprise *all* the circumstances. This, however, is by no means to be regretted. Such a complete coincidence between four narratives relating to the same events, as should extend to every minute circumstance, would argue collusion, or, at least, dependence; whereas, four narratives, each exhibiting the grand outlines of the story, but varying as to minuter matters, some mentioning one, and some another, according to the particular object or individual feeling of each respective writer, naturally suggest the ideas of honest and independent narration, and exclude those of contrivance and forgery.

54 Mark, xvi. 19. Luke, xxiv. 50—52. Acts, i. 9—12.
55 Acts, ii.

Admitting, then, the genuineness and authenticity of the historical books of the New Testament (both satisfactorily established, I trust, in my fifth letter), the resurrection of Jesus Christ cannot be denied. Yet, as this extraordinary fact is of the greatest moment in the Christian system, you will naturally expect that I will not quit the subject merely with this summary argument in its favour. I shall, therefore, devote the remainder of the present letter to the consideration of two or three such particular evidences as in themselves force our assent; and to a cursory view of some of the difficulties that spring from a denial of the fact.

Both the Jewish and the Gentile opposers of Christianity, in the primitive ages, admit that Jesus Christ suffered death by crucifixion, was buried, and that his tomb was found empty on the third day. Either, then, the body must have been *taken* away, or he rose from the dead. If the body were stolen, it must have been either by the enemies, or by the friends, of Christ: of these alternatives the former cannot be assumed for a moment; and I shall soon show that the latter, though rather more specious, is utterly untenable. The disciples of the Saviour affirm that he rose from the dead, and often appeared to *them*, as I have already related. They also, immediately after the event, set apart a solemn periodical day, and instituted a ceremony founded upon it, and commemorating it; the returning day, and the significant ceremony, having been observed regularly from that time, through all succeeding ages, to the present. Thus, with regard to the *day*, it appears from various passages, to two or three of which I refer you[56], that the apostles, very soon after the death of their Lord, set apart the *first* day of the week, being that on which they affirmed he rose from the dead, as a day of religious worship, of Christian rejoicing on account of that important event, calling it *the Lord's Day:* it appears, too, that the Christian converts *in general*, both at Jerusalem and at other places, united

[56] Acts, xx. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Rev. i. 10.

with them in solemnizing this day, and for the reason just specified. Farther, the most ancient writers in the Christian church, after the apostles, agree in assuring us that the observation of the first day of the week prevailed early and constantly. BARNABAS tells us, that in his time "the eighth day was observed with gladness, being that *on which Jesus rose from the dead.*" IGNATIUS calls it *the Queen of Days*, and assigns the same reason for its being kept holy. MELITO wrote a book concerning it. JUSTIN MARTYR and TERTULLIAN speak expressly, in their apologies, of stated Christian assemblies held on that day. CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, and many others, furnish similar evidence. Nay, PLINY, a very few years after the death of St. John, speaks of it as the sacred day of the Christians. By the observance of this day, which has ever since continued in the Christian Church, the memory of the event of Christ's resurrection is engraven upon time itself—upon that which, by its perpetual flux, consumes all things, and is itself perishing, yet will last through the successions of finite beings. Let the reasoning of Mr. Leslie adduced in my letter on miracles, be applied, then, to the case before us, and you will find it impossible to account rationally for the observance of the Lord's day without allowing the fact of the resurrection.

Thus again, with respect to *Baptism:* as a *Christian* ordinance, it was instituted (as I have already remarked) *after* the resurrection of Jesus Christ[57]. None were to be baptized except they believed: "If thou believest with all thine heart," said Philip to the Eunuch, "thou mayest" be baptized[58]. This antecedent belief included both the crucifixion and the *resurrection* of Jesus; and the primitive mode of administering baptism aptly represented both, agreeably to the language of Paul: "*Buried* with him in baptism, wherein also you are *risen* with him, through the faith of the operation of God who hath *raised him from*

[57] Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark, xvi. 16. [58] Acts, viii. 37.

the dead[59]." Now, on the day of Pentecost, when Peter addressed the multitude then collected together, he reasoned principally upon the fact of the resurrection, and affirmed that Jesus, whom they had crucified, was thus raised up in proof that he was "both Lord and Christ." So convincing were his arguments within that short distance from the epoch assigned to the resurrection, that on this one day *three thousand* believed, and were baptized, that is, baptized in token of their belief that Jesus died, rose again, and instituted Baptism *after* his resurrection. Here, therefore, in like manner, the reasoning is conclusive. It is impossible to account for the introduction of Baptism "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost[60]," at *any* time, and much less for the circumstance of *thousands* submitting to the ordinance within a few days of that on which the apostles declared Jesus rose, unless it be allowed that they were thoroughly convinced of the truth of the fact: and if thousands who were at Jerusalem at the precise period assigned to the resurrection of Jesus Christ had satisfied themselves of its reality, it is the most puerile of all puerile things (to say nothing of its banefulness) to devise and urge objections at the distance of eighteen hundred years: such, however, is the puerility of men whose minds are too strong to bend to the teachings of Infinite Wisdom.

But, as arguments in favour of this great fact flow from various quarters, let it be farther considered, that, if the account of Christ's resurrection had been false, the imposture must necessarily have been detected. For the advocates for Christianity may argue, and its opponents cannot with any appearance of reason deny, —that the apostles immediately after the resurrection declared it;—that they made this declaration upon the very spot where it was asserted the circumstance occurred;—that they did not disseminate their story covertly; but proclaimed it in the most open and public manner possible;—that they did not begin to circu-

[59] Col. ii. 12. [60] Matt. xxviii. 19.

late their report in some secret and obscure corner; but in one of the most celebrated and public places then existing in the world:—that they made choice of a season in which there was the greatest concourse and resort of all sorts of people thither, that they might gain the greatest number of hearers and of inquirers into the truth of their extraordinary narration:—that the professed adversaries of the Christian doctrine then at Jerusalem had many cogent reasons to stimulate them to exert their utmost efforts to prove it false:—that they had as much time and opportunity as could well be desired to devote to the detection of the imposture, had there been any:—and that they had likewise power in their hands, by which they were enabled to examine all persons and things that might in any way conduce to throw light upon this remarkable and highly interesting subject.

Under circumstances so favourable to refutation, there can be no doubt that the Jews would have refuted the story of the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ, had it been in their power: and, besides this, the Jews had an additional motive arising from the injury sustained by their moral character, unless they could prove the statements of the Christians to be intentionally and wickedly erroneous. It will be readily granted, I suppose, that, when two parties of men are directly and strongly opposed to each other, if the one asserts and publishes a statement as to matter of fact which is of the highest moment, and absolutely destructive of the interest of the other, and is not so palpably false as to carry with it plain indications of malignity and revenge, or of studied slander and scandal; that then, if the other party, upon whom this charge is made, does not in as solemn and public a manner refute it, or do something in its own vindication, which will, in the opinion of unbiased and unprejudiced persons, bear some proportion to the attack made upon it—in such case, the accused party tacitly acknowledges the truth of what the accusing party

has alleged, and thus, of consequence, relinquishes the cause. Now this is exactly the state of the case between the Jews and early Christians. The evangelist, Matthew, published to the world in unequivocal terms, that the Jews bribed the soldiers to report that the body of Christ was stolen by his disciples when they (the guards) were asleep[61]; and the early Christians uniformly asserted the same thing. To record thus in the evangelical history that the Jews were guilty of this ridiculous and self-destructive, and yet abominable piece of forgery and bribery; to tell the world that they acted so foul and sordid a part as to tamper with the soldiers, and get them to circulate a story which in their hearts they knew to be notoriously false, as well as absurd, since no man can accurately ascertain what is carried on near him when his senses are locked up in sleep; to do this, was to depict the ruling Jews to the world in the very worst colours in which men could be drawn, and to expose the cause of these enemies of Christ, as desperate and forlorn to the last degree. Is it not natural to conclude that the Jews would in some signal manner have vindicated themselves from this charge, if they had not known and felt that vindication was impossible, the thing being *notorious?* and is it not an equally necessary inference, that the Jews at that time were fully persuaded that Jesus Christ was indeed risen? otherwise, why should they offer bribes, and invent an absurd story, to conceal it?

Thus much may suffice to establish the truth of the momentous fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. From this outline of arguments, for it is indeed nothing more than an outline, you will perceive that the evidence in favour of this event is both forcible and satisfactory. To believe it, then, is reasonable; and it is freed from absurdity, because resurrection from the dead is manifestly as much within the power of God as creation; and every consistent theist

[61] Matt. xxviii. 13.

admits the latter. But the adoption of a contrary opinion is pregnant with absurdities and natural impossibilities; with the mention of a few of which I shall close this letter.

He who denies the resurrection of Jseus Christ, must believe,—That twelve poor men, fishermen and tentmakers, without power, and (all except Paul) without human learning, were able to deceive the wise, the learned, the prudent; and to lay their plot so deep, that neither their cotemporaries, nor any succeeding generation, should be able to detect and expose the cheat.

—That those very persons who but a few hours before were trembling with timidity and fear, whose want of courage (even according to their own account) overcame their fidelity, and caused them to forsake their master in his greatest extremity, notwithstanding their various professions, nay, protestations, of inviolable attachment and zeal; being so terrified with apprehensions that they dare not acknowledge themselves to be his disciples, but secreted themselves by day for fear of the Jews;—yet that these timid, irresolute creatures should all at once not only form the plan, but execute the bold, hazardous, and useless undertaking of conquering the guards, forcing the sepulchre, and carrying off the body of their crucified Lord.

—That men thus rash and desperate, engaged in an enterprise of so much danger, an enterprise which therefore required all possible expedition and despatch, should waste time in unaccountable niceties, and ceremonies (such as divesting the body of its burial-clothes, disposing them in separate portions, &c.) which could be of no manner of use; but evidently exposed them to the danger of being surprised by the guards, and taken into custody.

—That these timid, yet desperate men, who constituted a company of the greatest impostors that ever existed in the world, and who, therefore, must necessarily be the worst men that ever lived, did, notwithstanding, furnish mankind with the most comprehensive

and exact system of morality extant, teach such rules of living as were infinitely superior to any of the productions of Greek or Roman philosophers, and though their whole business was only to promote and disseminate falsehood and deception, yet denounced the severest eternal punishments upon all who indulged in such wicked practices.

—That these impostors, having themselves no correct notions of God, should notwithstanding impart the most rational and becoming opinions respecting him to the rest of mankind; and, by no other principles than those of delusion and irreligion, kindle a flame of desire in the breasts of thousands to serve and worship God.

—That they took far more pains to expose themselves to all the world, as the most abandoned sinners that ever came into it (for that they should *deceive* themselves so as to believe Jesus was seen *ten* distinct times after his resurrection, when he was not seen at all, cannot be imagined), than they need have done to establish the best reputation among their cotemporaries, and procure an immortal fame in all succeeding ages.

—That these impostors, after spending their lives in promulgating falsehood, died, not to testify their belief in a speculative doctrine respecting which they might be deluded by others, or self-deluded; but in attestation of a pretended fact, while they knew it was no fact; and all this under the strongest declarations of devotedness to God, and of adoration to their risen Saviour, who, they pretended, was now sitting in heaven to receive them[62].

Hence you will perceive, that as a general denial of revelation leads to numerous gross absurdities, of which a few were detailed in my first letter, so the denial of individual topics of revealed truth brings each its appropriate and dependent string of difficulties. He who denies the truth of Scripture prophecy must admit that things predicted have occurred, although there was an

[62] Acts, vii. 59.

infinitely great probability against their occurrence. He who disbelieves the miracles recorded in Scripture, must believe in other miracles. And he who denies the particular miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in consequence involves himself in the particular class of absurdities to which I have just adverted: besides which he voluntarily excludes himself from the only strong consolation a rational creature can possess at the hour of death, that which flows from a full persuasion of the resurrection to eternal life. "I am the Resurrection and the Life," said Jesus Christ: "whosoever believeth in me shall not die eternally[63]:" and his own resurrection fully establishes the truth of this consolatory declaration. But the proud philosophist who rejects this doctrine, so suited to the wishes and the wants of man, not only places himself below the Christian, but below the *Indian*, in point of prospects of futurity. The poor untutored, despised Indian

> "Thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
> His faithful *dog* shall bear him company."

While many of those who pity the stupidity of the Indian, and sneer at the credulity of the Christian, live and die under the embasing conviction that at death themselves and their *dogs* will be alike extinct, alike free from responsibility, alike unconscious of all around them, alike excluded from pleasure, alike liberated from pain[64]! I am, &c.

[63] John, xi. 25, 26.

[64] It was a common assertion of Diderot, that between him and his dog "*il n'y avoit de difference que habit.*"

LETTER IX.

Evidence drawn from the rapid Diffusion of Christianity, and its Triumph over Persecution; also from the Purity and Excellency of the Scripture Morality and Theology.

The two topics I have selected for discussion in this letter might each furnish matter for a volume; and the argument, if judiciously handled, would rather gain strength, than become weakened by such dilation. I mean, however, with regard to each, to present you with a mere outline of the argument, and leave you to give colour and force to the former, by your acquaintance with the history of the first four centuries of the Church, and to the latter, by a careful perusal of the Holy Scriptures.

Our reasoning is simple, and rests upon the principles of Natural Religion. God will aid that which is good, and check that which is bad, in so far that each shall be rendered subservient to a higher good: hence it is agreeable to Divine Providence to give the most rapid and extensive diffusion, independently of secular concurrence, to that which is, in itself and its tendencies, best: and hence it will follow, since God has regard to human affairs, and since the Christian Religion cannot be good if it be not *true*, or could not gain ground as it did in opposition to earthly power if unassisted by heavenly power, that it is what it professes to be, and is therefore *divine*.

It is, I believe, an undeniable fact, that before the end of the second century Christianity had been more widely disseminated over the face of the earth, than any one religion, true or false. Heathenism, in all its varieties of dismal shades, had been thickening for thousands of years, until "darkness covered the lands, and gross darkness the people." But as the natural sun chases away darkness from whole regions, with analogous rapidity did the "Sun of Righteousness"

dispel the moral gloom which every where prevailed. Thus IRENÆUS affirms that, in his time, not only those who dwelt near Palestine, but the Egyptians, the Libyans, the Celts, the Germans, &c. had one belief: nay, says he, "the preaching of the truth shines *every where*, and enlightens all men who are *willing* to come to the knowledge of the truth[1]." CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS again affirms that, in his time, "Christ was known in *all* nations[2]." And, that I may not needlessly multiply quotations, let me, once for all, cite TERTULLIAN[3]: "In whom else have all nations believed, but in Christ, who lately came? In whom have all these nations believed? *i. e.* Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia; the inhabitants of Pontus, and Asia, and Pamphylia; they that dwell in Egypt, and they who live in Africa, beyond Cyrene; Romans, and strangers; Jews, and other nations in Jerusalem; the various sorts of people in Getulea; the many countries of the Moors; all the borders of Spain; the different nations of Gaul; and those parts of Britain which the Romans could not reach, *even they are subject to Christ;* the Sarmatæ also, and Daci, the Germans and Scythians; and many other obscure nations, with many provinces and islands scarcely known to us: in all these the name of Christ, lately as he came, reigns." Presently after, this distinguished apologist shows how much larger the kingdom of Christ was, even in his time (the end of the second century), than any of the

[1] Iren. lib. i. c. 3. [2] Strom. v.

[3] Cont. Jud. lib. 1. The following is the reluctant testimony of Gibbon, *Hist. Rom. Empire*, ix. 244: "The progress of Christianity was one hundred and twenty at the Ascension (Acts, i. 15), soon after three thousand (c. ii. 41), then five thousand, and in little less than two years after the Ascension to great multitudes at Jerusalem only. Mahomet was three years silently occupied in making fourteen converts, and they of his own family; and proceeded so slow at Mecca, that in the seventh year only eighty-three men and eighteen women retired to Ethiopia—and he had no established religion at Mecca to contend with."

Great Monarchies, as they are usually called, and then proceeds thus: "The kingdom of Christ is every where extended, every where received; in all the above-mentioned nations is esteemed. He reigns every where, is adored in all places, is divided equally amongst all known countries." From this wonderful success attending the promulgation of Christianity in all nations, it soon obtained the name of ἡ κρατοῦσα διδαχή, or the *prevailing doctrine;* as Porphyry and Julian both acknowledge.

Now what religion was there that could compare with this for the extent of its possession? The only plausible answer is—Heathenism. But Heathenism, it should be recollected, though it be one name, is not one religion. Heathens do not all worship the same thing, as I have abundantly shown in a former letter; nor are they governed by the same law, or bow to one common master in religious matters. The only religions which even now can bear any comparison in point of number of votaries with the Christian, are the Jewish and the Mahometan; and both of them are decidedly inferior in respect of rapid diffusion. The Jews, indeed, though very much scattered over the face of the earth, are but one nation, and profess one religion, namely, that which in the Divine dispensations prepared the way for Christianity. But their religion, it is well known, has received no remarkable increase since the time of Christ; and even their sacred law is made more known through the efforts of the Christians than their own. As to Mahometanism, it is settled and established in many countries; but not *alone:* for Christianity is esteemed in some of those countries; nay, in some, indeed, by a greater proportion of the inhabitants: whereas, on the contrary, there are many parts of Christendom where there is not a single Mahometan to be found, except as a sojourner or a visitor.

How, then, was this rapid promulgation, and permanent preponderancy, of the Christian religion occasioned? Was it primarily, by courting the aid of the

great, the learned, the powerful; by enlisting states and governments in the cause of Christ? Certainly not. Most men, we observe, are prepared to follow the example, and comply with the wishes, of kings and rulers; especially if they are enforced with retributive or compulsive laws. To these the religion of the Jews, of the Pagans, and of the Mahometans, owed much of their increase. But Christianity, during the time it spread most rapidly, was not incorporated with the state, as was Judaism, and many systems of Paganism; nor was it propagated by the sword of its advocates, as was Mahometanism. They who first taught the Christian religion were not only men without any secular authority, but of low fortune, such as fishermen and tent-makers: and yet, by the instrumentality of these men, that doctrine was in the course of thirty years disseminated, not only through all parts of the Roman empire, but as far as the Parthians and Indians. And not only at its earliest commencement, but for nearly three hundred years, by the industry and zeal of private, obscure persons, without any threats, without any invitations, nay, opposed as much as possible by those who were in authority, this religion was so widely promulgated, that long before Constantine professed Christianity, it was received in the greatest part of the Roman Empire. "We are but of yesterday," says Tertullian, "and have filled all places belonging to you; your cities, islands, castles, towns, councils; your very *camps*, wards, companies, the palace, senate, and forum: we have left you only your *temples*[4]."

Nor was this effected by adventitious means. They

[4] Tert. Apol. ii. cap. 37. He adds: "We could make a terrible war upon you, by simply being so passively revengeful as only to leave you. Should the numerous host of Christians retire from the empire into some remote region, the loss of so many men of all ranks and degrees would leave a hideous gap, and inflict a shameful scar upon the government. You would stand aghast at your desolation, and be struck dumb at the general silence and horror of nature, as if the whole world were departed." There may be a *little* rhetorical exaggeration in this; yet it must, in the main, accord with facts, or it would have been at once contradicted.

among the Greeks who delivered their perfect precepts of morality, at the same time rendered themselves acceptable by other arts: as the Platonists, by the study of geometry; the Peripatetics, by the history of plants and of animals; the Stoics, by logical subtlety; the Pythagoreans, by the knowledge of numbers, and their application to the principles of harmony. Many of them, as Plato, Xenophon, Theophrastus, &c. were endowed with the most admirable eloquence. Not so the Apostles and first teachers of Christianity. "When I came to you," says Paul to the Corinthians[5], "I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God; for I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom; but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Indeed, as if in order to mortify human vanity, to convince the world that religion was a plain, simple thing, and that a little common sense, accompanied with an honest good heart, was sufficient to propagate it, without any aid derived from the cabinets of princes, or the schools of human science, the Founder of the Christian Religion took twelve poor illiterate men into his company, admitted them to an intimacy with himself, and after he had kept them awhile in tuition, promised them the aid of his Spirit, and sent them to preach the good tidings of salvation to their countrymen. A while after he selected seventy more, giving them a simple but efficacious preparation; and sent them forth to preach the Gospel. "As ye go," says he, "*preach*, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses: nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul[6]." Thus

[5] 1 Cor. ii. 1—4. [6] Matt. x. 7—10. 28.

equipped, they went forth to their momentous but dangerous undertaking. They delivered the history, they taught the doctrines, they declared the precepts, promises, and threatenings, in bare words, unaccompanied by any secular power. Yet they were every where successful as to the object of their mission, and in the course of two centuries accomplished what I have already described: so that we must of necessity allow, either that they were attended by miracles, or that the secret influence of God favoured their efforts, or both: and in either case it follows, that the cause they espoused was the cause of God.

This will appear still more obviously, if we consider the impediments with which they had to contend, and the difficulties which arose even from the nature of the religion they professed. Considered as a system intended to effect proselytism by the usual means, it was fundamentally erroneous. No quality could be imagined more directly calculated, considering the state of the world about the Christian era, to frustrate the attempts of the primitive Christians, than the inflexibility, or, as it has been called, the intolerance of their zeal. It is true, the religion they proposed was so far of a general nature, that none were necessarily excluded from the benefit of it: all were invited to partake of its blessings. Yet, notwithstanding this liberality, Christianity was in the strictest sense, in relation to other religions then prevailing, an *unsocial religion*. Unlike the various schemes and modifications of polytheism, it would neither accommodate itself to the reigning superstitions, nor would it admit of any association with them. "Keep yourselves from *idols*[7]," was an injunction incessantly ringing in the ears, and meeting the eyes of the first disciples. "What can be the reason," said Æmilian, prefect of Egypt, to Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, "why you may not still adore that God of yours, supposing him to be a God, in conjunction with our Gods?" "We worship no other God," re-

[7] 1 John, v. 21. 1 Cor. x. 14. 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17.

plied Dionysius.[8] In the ears of a polytheist such language was unpardonable; yet it was the language uniformly suggested by the Christian religion. Thus when *Cyprian* was brought before the proconsul, "Thou art Thascius Cyprian (says he), who hast been a ringleader to men of a perverse mind: the emperor commands thee to do *sacrifice;* consult, then, thy welfare." To this he answered, "I *am* Cyprian, I *am* too a Christian, and I *cannot* sacrifice to your gods: do, therefore, what you are commanded; as for me, in so just a cause I need no time for consideration." Similarly noble and decided was the conduct of Polycarp and Basil; all tending to evince that *their* religion was formed to stand alone; and wherever it prevailed, it was over the *ruins* of other systems. With such pretensions the heralds of the Gospel could not well hope for a favourable reception. Their apparent arrogance could only serve to provoke the indignation of those whom they endeavoured to convert; and the ardent zeal with which they prosecuted their cause would, "*according to the* NATURAL *course of things,*" have a direct tendency to defeat their object[9].

Besides this, the minds of those to whom this new religion was proposed were preoccupied. They were filled with opinions, and moulded into habits, all of which were directly and powerfully repugnant to the spirit of Christianity. The Hebrews were prepared for the reception of the Law of Moses by the previous appointment of circumcision, and by their knowledge of one God. But, from a moderate acquaintance with the state of the Jewish and Gentile world at the origin of Christianity, it must be evident that every thing that most strongly influences and tyrannizes over the mind of man,—religion, custom, law, policy, pride, interest, vice, and even philosophy,—were united against the Gospel[10]. These enemies were, in their own nature,

8 Vide Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. cap. 11.

9 See Warburton's Divine Legation, book ii. sect. 6.

10 Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with the Jew Trypho, affirms

very formidable and difficult to be subdued, had they even suffered themselves to be attacked upon equal ground. But, not relying upon their own strength, when barely opposed to the obscure disciples of a crucified malefactor (for prejudice and falsehood are always timid and fearful), they intrenched themselves behind that power of which they were in possession, and rendered themselves inaccessible, as they imagined, to Christianity, by planting round them, not only all kinds of civil discouragements, but even torments, chains, and death; terrors which no one could despise, who had any views of ambition or interest, and who was not even contented to resign his reputation, his ease, his fortune, and his life;—for the relinquishment of all these was, as Jesus Christ himself had predicted, the frequent consequence of the early profession of Christianity.

"And now," said St. Paul, on taking leave of the elders of the church at Ephesus, "now behold I go urged by the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that *bonds and*

that the Jews in the first century established *a universal mission*, for the express purpose of counteracting the propagation of the Christian faith. The High-priests and teachers, he assures us, caused the name of Christ to be blasphemed and profaned throughout the known world: "They sent messengers into all countries to say that an impious and unjust sedition had been raised by one Jesus, a Galilean, whose body, after crucifixion, was stolen away by his disciples;" and *now* their descendants are every where scattered, a perpetual monument of the divine origin and truth of the religion, which eighteen hundred years ago was so assiduously and vehemently opposed! See Just. Mart. Dial. cum Tryp. sect. 25, Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. cap. 18, Cave's Apostolici, vol. i. p. 147, or Collinson's Key to the Fathers, p. 344.

We who have been accustomed to read of the persecutions of sincere, devotional Christians, in all ages of the world, are apt to forget that on the introduction of Christianity, persecution for religion was a *new* thing. Origen (cont. Celsus, lib. ii. cap. 14), adduces this fact in proof of our Lord's divine mission, and asks, "What religion is there in the whole habitable world, that wants the advantage of a *toleration*, except that which our Saviour introduced?"

afflictions await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God[11]." Similar to this in kind, if not in degree, must have been the expectation of all zealous Christians in the primitive ages. They were called, in consequence of their profession, to the greatest sufferings. For centuries they were excluded from all places of honour, were fined, had their goods confiscated, were banished; and these were comparatively *small* things. They were condemned to the mines, had inflicted upon them the most cruel torments that men could invent; such as the rack, the wheel, throwing to wild beasts, tearing asunder by branches of trees, burning in pitched coats, boiling in oil or lead, crucifixion with the head downwards: thus, in a short time, the punishments of death were so common that, as related by the writers of those times, no famine, pestilence, or war, ever consumed more men at a time. The persecutions, to which the early Christians were exposed, followed one another with furious and unrelenting rapidity, leaving the Church scarcely time to breathe between the several sanguinary attacks under which she languished and suffered. No sooner had the converts to Christianity, in the language of Tacitus, become a vast multitude[12], than the first great persecution began, under *Nero*, A. D. 65. The second happened under *Domitian*, A. D. 90. The third commenced under *Trajan*, A. D. 100. The fourth under *Adrian*, A. D. 126, and continued under *Antoninus Pius*, to A. D. 140. The fifth under *Marcus Aurelius*, A. D. 162. The sixth under *Severus*, A. D. 203. The seventh under *Maximinus*, A. D. 236. The eighth under *Decius*, A. D. 251. The ninth under *Valerian*, A. D. 258. The tenth under *Diocletian*, A. D. 303. And what, you will ask, was the nature of these perse-

[11] Acts, xx. 22—24.

[12] Ingens multitudo. Tac. Hist. lib. xv. sect. 44.

cutions? In reply, I shall briefly describe the last. In the edict issued by Diocletian, in 303, he commanded all the churches to be demolished, and the Christians to be *deprived of their sacred writings*, and of all their civil privileges and immunities: it occasioned the death of very many, who refused to surrender their religious books to the magistrates. Indeed Tertullian informs us that twenty thousand Christians were burned by Diocletian's orders on ONE *Christmas Day;* of whom many were burned in a church where they were assembled for worship. A second edict ordered the *imprisonment* of all bishops and ministers of the Gospel. A third commanded that the most exquisite *tortures* should be employed, to constrain these captives to lead the way in open apostasy. In the fourth, promulgated A. D. 304, magistrates were enjoined to exercise these tortures upon *all Christians*, without distinction of rank or sex, for the purpose of forcing them to renounce their religion. These edicts, which extended over the whole Roman empire, with the exception of Gaul, were executed with such active, brutal, and successful zeal, that pillars were erected in Spain in honour of Diocletian, for having "*every where* abolished the superstition of Christ;" and a medal of this emperor, still extant, was struck with the inscription,—"*Nomine Christianorum deleto*[13]." Besides these, there were persecutions in Africa, in Persia, in Arabia, Cappadocia, Mesopotamia, Nicomedia, Phrygia, and in almost every place where the Christian name was known. Christianity had every where armed against it, the policy of empires, the jealousy of magistrates both supreme and subordinate, the interests of the priesthood, the virulent, systematic, and well disciplined rancour of the philosophers, and the furious passions of an inflamed and superstitious populace; and thus, those who suffered for "the cause of Christ,"

[13] Milner's Church History, vol. ii. p. 6, 7. See also Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. viii. and the testimonies collected by D'Oyley, in his "Four Dissertations," p. 210, &c.

men, women, youths of both sexes, were so numerous as to be estimated only in the mass; many of them falling under the weight of such excruciating torments, as cannot be read or thought of without agony and horror. Still, as Cyprian, when exhorting the martyrs of his time, tells them of those who had gone before, "in the hottest conflict they never shrunk, but maintained their ground with a free confession, an unshaken mind, a divine courage, destitute indeed of external weapons, but armed with 'the shield of faith:' in torments they stood stronger than their tormentors; their bruised and mangled limbs proved too hard for the instruments with which their flesh was racked and pulled from them; the blows, however often repeated, could not conquer their impregnable faith; even though they not only sliced and tore off the flesh, but raked into their very bowels, and let out blood enough to extinguish the flames of persecution, or mitigate the heat of their hellish fire." Thus, though such as these were the difficulties with which Christianity had to struggle for many ages, still she prevailed. "*The blood of the martyrs became the* SEED *of the Church*[14]." That which might have been thought most uncongenial

[14] "The more you mow us down, the thicker we rise: the Christian blood you spill is like the seed you sow; it springs from the earth again, and fructifies the more." Tertullian, Apol. c. 50.

D'Oyley, in the book referred to in the last note, says, "I cannot, I confess, reflect upon these examples but with the highest admiration. For, though it is very natural to conceive, that, for a man to huff and bluster, when shelled in steel, and indebted to the armourer for his bravery, is no great argument of merit: as, when the ancient poets first made their heroes *invulnerable*, and then represent them as *fearless*, they give but a poor idea of their courage. Yet, when every *stroke wounds*, and sufferings make a smart and piercing impression: nay, as in the case of torture, when cruelty gorges itself upon the naked tender body, as a prostrate, defenceless prey; for a man to be then daring and regardless, *to resist unto blood*, shows a boldness and constancy truly Christian; an evidence not barely of a well poised and masculine spirit, but of such a *faith* as disarms fear and pain, and despises death; a faith which is greater and more honourable in the sight of Heaven, than that which *removes mountains*, or, like *Joshua's*, arrests the motion of the sun."

to the growth of the new religion, was found most propitious to it. It prevailed, notwithstanding this astonishing, this unprecedented, this universal opposition, so as to change the whole face of things, to overturn the temples and the altars of the gods, silence the oracles, mortify the impious pride of emperors, confound the presumptuous wisdom of philosophers,—and infuse into the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands a new spirit, and transform them into new men.

Whence did the new religion acquire this mysterious and inextinguishable potency? "Was it from Heaven, or of men?" No natural cause can account for it: indeed it is contrary to the whole course of natural causes. Weak, illiterate men, of the lowest class,—men, who had nothing *in this world* to offer their converts, but sufferings, tortures, and the cross,—who were every where oppugned, persecuted, and ill treated, "even unto death;"—these were they who triumphed "*over flesh and blood*," and converted the universe. They continued to suffer, century after century, till they had subdued the world *by dying for their religion*. The cause is to be found alone in the omnipotence of truth, and especially the truth of God. "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the blind see, the dead are raised, the poor (reckoned of no estimation in the eyes of the world), the *poor* have the gospel preached unto them[15]." In this name the Legislator of the universe speaks; nations hear, and rejoice, and live: and thus we arrive at the only competent and adequate solution of the difficulty, why *genuine* Christianity, whose peculiar characteristic was *nonresistance*, should be every where and in all ages opposed; and yet should every where and in all ages increase. Thus, in the clearest and purest manifestation of himself to the world, God evinced his perfect independence of human wisdom and human power: he passed by the splendour of thrones and the glory of philosophy, and

[15] Matt. xi. 5.

showed that he could command all nature, and influence all hearts, by means the most humble, and most likely to be contemned. "He chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound those which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, did God choose, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that *no flesh should glory in his presence*[16]."

Having thus exhibited the argument drawn from the early propagation of Christianity, let me now briefly advert to that which flows from the purity, excellency, and extent, of the Christian morality and theology.

The nature of these may be gathered from the testimony of the enemies to Christianity, from its effect upon the character and conduct of its converts in all ages, and from the tenour of the Holy Scriptures. Here then, first, as to the testimony of enemies to Christianity, since I must conform to the principle of selection, I shall cite only two; but they will be amply sufficient for my purpose. Of these, the first is PLINY the younger, who, in his celebrated letter to Trajan, writes thus from Nicomedia, concerning the Christians under his government:—"The sum total of their fault, or of their error, consisted in assembling upon a certain stated day, before it was light, to sing alternately among themselves *hymns to Christ as to a God;* binding themselves, by oath, not to be guilty of any wickedness; not to steal, nor to rob; not to commit adultery; nor break their faith when plighted; nor to deny the deposits in their hands, whenever called upon to restore them. These ceremonies performed, they usually departed, and came together again to take a repast, the meat of which was innocent, and eaten promiscuously[17]." The only crime this governor could discover in the Christians, was "merely an obstinate kind of superstition, carried to great excess." He therefore asks, "Must they be punished for the *name*, though otherwise

[16] 1 Cor. i. 27—29. [17] Orrery's Pliny, book x. epist. 97.

innocent? Or is the name itself so flagitious, as to be punishable?" Conformably with this, we find that the early Christian apologists are frequently exposing the cruelty and folly of the heathen magistrates; because, while they put others to the rack to extort *confession* of their crimes, they tormented Christians that they might *deny* and renounce their characteristic name.

My next evidence is LUCIAN, one of the ablest writers of his age, and one of the chief magistrates of a great province of the empire. "The legislator of the Christians (says he) persuades them that they are *all brethren*. They secede from us: they abjure the gods of the Grecians. They *adore their crucified teacher*, and conform their lives to his laws. They despise riches; every thing amongst them is in common; and they are constant in their faith. To this day they adore their great man crucified in Palestine[18]."

Such, then, according to the testimony of Pliny and Lucian, was the effect of Christianity upon the minds and conduct of those who embraced it, that they engaged not to commit *any crime*, that they adhered strictly to their promises, that they could have no crime imputed to them but obstinate attachment to their religion, that they despised riches, and that they loved one another as brethren. If any person were seeking for criteria of a false religion, of a religion founded upon wickedness and cemented by deceit (and such must the Christian religion be, if it did not emanate from God), would he be satisfied with such as these?

But let us notice the effect of Christianity upon one who was long a *hater* of it, and became, notwithstanding, its illustrious defender. I mean the Apostle Paul. What was his character before his conversion to Chris-

[18] Lucian de Morte Peregrini. For other testimonies from Antoninus Pius, Trypho, &c., see Cave's Primitive Christianity, part i. ch. 4. And for Tertullian's powerful raillery on Trajan's celebrated letter to Pliny, delineating the conduct which he was to pursue with respect to the Christians, see *Apologet.* cap. 2, or the *Pantologia*, art. TRAJAN.

tianity? That of a furious bigot, an unrelenting persecutor of all whose religious opinions were different from his own,—a man who "breathed threatenings and slaughter" against others whose only crime was sublime virtue,—a man who delighted in sanguinary scenes, who held the clothes of those who stoned martyrs, probably regretting that he was too young to be more actively engaged in the brutal scene,—a man whose principal delight was in "making havoc of the church," disturbing domestic privacy, "entering into houses, and haling men and women to prison;" who "punished them *oft* in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being *exceedingly mad* against them, persecuted them unto strange cities[19]." How different were his actions and his sentiments after he had been converted on his way to Damascus, and became "obedient unto the heavenly vision!" Observe how gentle, tender, and sympathizing, is the demeanour; how pure, how elevated, how benevolent, how peculiarly fitted to the wants of universal society, are the ethics become of the man who just before found his greatest pleasure and glory in persecuting and torturing his fellow-creatures! "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly-affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice; and weep with them that weep. Mind not high things. Be not wise in your own conceits. Live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good[20]." Where, except in the

[19] Acts, vii. 58; viii. 1—3; ix. 1; xxvi. 10, 11, 19.
[20] Rom. xii. 9—21.

Bible, or in books which inculcate the sentiments of the Bible, will you find such a group of admirable, peace-inspiring precepts? Observe, again, how forcibly this apostle depicts the sublime importance of charity, or love. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing[21]." Surely this was not always the language of the fanatical persecutor Saul! Whence, then, did he derive these elevated sentiments, this preference of universal benevolence to the most splendid and miraculous endowments? Are these the notions of a vile impostor, or of a poor deluded enthusiast, or of one whom "much learning has made mad?" No; they are the genuine productions of the religion of Jesus, invariably manifested in a greater or less degree wherever it is efficacious; and proving clearly that that religion proceeds from Him who wills the harmony and the happiness of the physical and rational world.

Look again at the language of the Divine Founder of the Christian religion. Read some of his discourses. Take those, for example, which are recorded in the 5th, 6th, 7th, 10th, and 25th chapters of Matthew's Gospel; and those in the 12th, 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of John's Gospel. I know your soul is susceptible of exquisite feelings, and that you can readily discern and distinguish the good, the beautiful, the pathetic, the sublime, the sincere: and I therefore may ask you again with confidence, could these admirable and astonishing discourses proceed from the mouth of an impostor? Could they be the workings of a heated imagination? Could they proceed from any

[21] 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3. See also Acts, xxi. 13. 2 Cor. ii. 4. Phil. iii. 18.

mere mortal? It is impossible for any man of correct understanding and unbiased mind, to answer these questions in the affirmative

But we need not stop at an examination of a few discourses of our Lord and his apostles, we may go much farther, and taking in the whole scope, object, and tendency of Scripture, affirm its universal superiority to every other system of moral instruction.

A religion that comes from Heaven may naturally be expected to furnish the most elevated, impressive, and glorious conceptions of the attributes and operations of the Deity So does the religion of the Bible

A religion that comes from Heaven should furnish incentives to the most sublime virtue, and the strongest motives to avoid sin, its promises and threatenings should be respectively of the most inviting and alarming kind Such are the promises and threatenings of the Bible.

A religion that comes from Heaven should teach man his true character, should tell him what he is and what he may become, should give him correct estimates of all around him, especially in relation to morals and happiness. So does the religion of the Bible

A religion that comes from Heaven would naturally condemn selfishness, pride, a secular spirit, discontent, and sensuality; and inculcate the principles of self-denial, resignation universal harmony, love, and peace So does the religion of the Bible

A religion that comes from Heaven should teach the best methods of "keeping the heart," and regulating the affections So does the religion of the Bible

A religion that comes from Heaven, and that is formed for universality, should develop the great principles of social union, should explain and enforce all the relative duties, should soften and civilize the human character[22], should perfect and ennoble every natural sentiment which tends to make man cooperate

[22] To this effect, Theodoret, writing against the Gentiles, in favour of the excellency of Christian precepts compared with those of the

with his fellow-creatures for good. So does the religion of the Bible.

A religion that comes from Heaven may naturally be expected to contain new precepts, such as obviously correspond with the object of it. So does the religion of the Bible, and especially that of the *perfective* dispensation of the New Testament, where the precepts tend in an especial manner to "*prepare us for the kingdom of Heaven.*" Here the new precepts point to poorness of spirit, humility, self-abasement, detachment from the world, repentance, faith, forgiveness of injuries, charity. All these were unknown to the Pagan moralists.

A religion that comes from Heaven may be expected to rest upon some such scheme or plan as would never have entered the mind of man. So does the Christian religion. Its Founder made *his own sufferings and death* a requisite part of his original plan, essential to his mission, and necessary to the salvation of his followers. This infinitely surpassed all human conceptions, inventions, or expectations.

A religion that comes from Heaven should teach the purest and most rational worship. So does the Christian religion. It teaches us that "God is a Spirit, and that they who worship him must worship him *in spirit and in truth.*" These two words exclude formality, hypocrisy, and deadness in devotion; and teach us that God requires of us the sincere homage of the heart.

A religion that comes from Heaven will incessantly invite men thither. So does the Christian religion.

A religion that comes from Heaven, and that is constituted to be universal, should meet man in all direc-

philosophers, gives various instances of *whole nations* which were converted from the most brutish, savage, and lewd manners, to mildness, gentleness, benevolence, and chastity, by the power of Christianity. See Theod. De Curand. Græc. Affectib. Serm. 9, de Leg.; or Cave's Primitive Christianity, part i. ch. 3, p. 58, &c.

tions, and come in contact with him at every point. So does the religion of the Gospel. Its precepts and doctrines are adapted to our advantage in all circumstances of life and conduct. Like the stars "in the glorious firmament of the sky," the precepts and promises applicable to human life are universally scattered over the face of the Scriptures; though, like the stars, they are more thickly grouped, and shine with more beauty and refulgence in some places than in others. Still the one and the other exist for *our good,* and both may be contemplated as

"For ever singing, as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine."

Examining the various portions of the word of God under these impressions, and with this view, we shall find that there is a mutual connexion and harmony between them. Thus, every precept will be found to have its exemplification; every command its corresponding benefit; every want its corresponding prayer; and the aids of the Spirit uniformly offered. Thus, also, every duty is urged by an appropriate motive; every blessing has its dependent duty; every trial its adequate support; every temptation its peculiar "way of escape" from it; every affliction its commensurate consolation; every situation has suggested its suitable religious employments; every period in life, and every relation in society, brings with it vocations and difficulties peculiar to itself, all of which are provided for in the richness and exuberance of Scripture. Nay, even in the last great and solemn change, when the friends of a dying Christian show, by their aching hearts and streaming eyes, that earthly hopes are at an end; when a human creature most needs the consolations and supports of religion, then does the Christian religion often most manifest its power—enabling the weeping relatives to endure the acuteness without the bitterness of grief, and "sorrow not as those who are without

hope,"—and, at the same time, plucking away the sting of death, and giving the departing saint to feel that when "*flesh and heart fail, God is the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever*[23]." Such are the benefits, the blessings, and the aids of the Christian religion. It fills the minds of its genuine disciples with true light, it reforms their hearts, it rightly disposes them towards God and their fellow-creatures: it teaches them how to bear prosperity without highmindedness, adversity without murmuring; how humility may exist without meanness, and dignity without pride; it makes them more reasonable in all their actions; and inspires them with fortitude, contentment, devotion, and contempt of the world: it communicates correct notions of its own supreme value, of the sanctity of morality, the vanity of earthly passions, the misery and corruption of our nature, the littleness of every thing but God: it delivers its disciples from the greatest, that is, from moral evils; teaches them the proper use of temporal mercies; and provides for them an inexhaustible and eternal store of intellectual and moral good. If the religion which accomplishes all this be false, where can we seek for truth? If the inestimable advantages it promises are to be despised and rejected, what is there upon or under the earth (and on this hypothesis there is *nothing above it*) that is worth retaining?

Be it recollected, however, and with this remark I shall conclude the present letter, that the enjoyments of the Christian religion are confined exclusively to sincere Christians. "To these enjoyments, therefore, you will necessarily continue a stranger unless you resign yourself *wholly* to its power: for the consolations of religion are reserved to reward, to sweeten, and to stimulate obedience. Many, without renouncing the profession of Christianity, without formally rejecting its distinguishing doctrines, live in such an habitual violation

[23] Ps. lxxiii. 26.

of its laws, and contradiction to its spirit, that, conscious they have more to fear than to hope from its truth, they are never able to contemplate it without terror. It haunts their imagination instead of tranquillizing their hearts, and hangs with depressing weight on all their enjoyments and pursuits. Their religion, instead of comforting them under their troubles, is itself their greatest trouble, from which they seek refuge in the dissipation and vanity of the world, until the throbs and tumults of conscience force them back upon religion. Thus suspended between opposite powers, the sport of contradictory influences, they are disqualified for the happiness of both worlds, and neither enjoy the pleasures of sin, nor the peace of piety. Is it surprising to find a mind thus bewildered in uncertainty, and dissatisfied with itself, court deception, and embrace with eagerness every pretext to mutilate the claims, and enervate the authority of Christianity; forgetting that it is of the very essence of the religious principle to preside and control, and that it is impossible to *serve God and mammon?* It is this class of persons who are chiefly in danger of being entangled in the snares of infidelity. Yet the champions of infidelity have much more reason to be ashamed than to boast of such converts[24]."

I am, &c.

[24] Hall on Modern Infidelity. Works, vol. i.

LETTER X.

On the Inspiration of Scripture.

THE various trains of argument and observation laid open to you in my former letters have, I hope, fully convinced you that the several books of Scripture deserve credence as genuine and authentic; but, in order that the truths and doctrines which they contain may press upon your mind with their full weight, it is necessary you should have a conviction of their Divine authority. A firm and cordial belief of the INSPIRATION of the Bible is, indeed, of the highest moment; for unless you are persuaded that those who were employed in the composition of the respective books were entirely preserved from error, a conviction of their honesty and integrity will be but of little avail. Honest men may err, may point out the wrong track, however unwilling they may be to deceive; and if those who have penned what we receive as revelation are thus open to mistakes, we are still left to make the voyage of life in the midst of rocks and shelves and quicksands, with a compass vacillating and useless, and our pole-star enveloped in mists and obscurity.

But some of these writers assure us that "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God[1];" meaning, at least, the Jewish Scriptures; a declaration which deserves attention on the score of the general veracity by which we have already shown their assertions are always marked. Still, as a like claim is made by writers who, it has been ascertained, were wicked and designing, let us inquire on what grounds and to what extent the divine inspiration of the Bible ought to be admitted.

Theologians have enumerated several kinds of Inspiration; such as an *inspiration of superintendency*, in which God so influences and directs the mind of any person as to keep him more secure from error in some complex discourse, than he would have been merely by the use of his natural faculties: *plenary superin-*

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 16.

tendent inspiration, which excludes any mixture of error whatever from the performance so superintended: *inspiration of elevation*, where the faculties act in a regular, and, as it should seem, in a common manner, yet are raised to an extraordinary degree, so that the composition shall, upon the whole, have more of the true sublime, or pathetic, than natural genius could have given:—and *inspiration of suggestion*, in which the use of the faculties is superseded, and God does, as it were, speak directly to the mind, making such discoveries to it as it could not otherwise have obtained, and dictating the very words in which such discoveries are to be communicated, if they are designed as a message to others.

It is not my purpose to attempt to ascertain how far different portions of Scripture were composed under one or other of these kinds of inspiration. I have enumerated them merely to show you that those, who contend that Scripture is inspired, have not arrived at their decision by a gross and careless process, but by sedulous, critical, and discriminating investigation. I mean, however, to affirm, and I trust the references at the foot of the page, together with a few particular arguments which I shall advance, will prove to you the reasonableness of admitting, that, while the authors employed in the composition of the Bible exercised generally their own reason and judgment[2], the Spirit of God effectually stirred them up to write[3]; appointed to each his proper portion and topic, corresponding with his natural talents, and the necessities of the church in his time[4]; enlightened their minds, and gave them a distinct view of the truths they were to deliver[5]; strengthened and refreshed their memories to recollect whatever they had seen or heard, the

[2] Ps. xlv. 1. Mark, xii. 36. Luke, i. 3. Acts, i. 1. 1 Pet. i. 11.
[3] 2 Pet. i. 21. [4] 2 Pet. i. 21. Matt. xxv. 15.
[5] Jer. i. 11—16; xiii. 9—14. Ezek. iv. 4—8. Dan. viii. 15—19; ix. 22—27; x. 1, 8. Amos, vii. 7, 8; viii. 2. Zech. i. 19—21; iv. 11—14; v. 6. John, xvi. 13. Eph. iii. 3, 4. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

insertion of which in their writings would be beneficial[6]; directed them to select from a multitude of facts what was proper for the edification of the church, and neither more nor less[7]; excited afresh in their minds such images and ideas as had been laid up in their memories, and directed them to other ends and purposes than themselves would ever have done of their own accord[8]; suggested and imprinted upon their minds such matters as could not have been discovered or known by reason, observation, or information, but were subjects of pure revelation[9]; superintended every particular writer, so as to render him infallible in his matter, words, and order, especially whenever they related to facts, discourses, or doctrines, the communication of which is the great object of Scripture; thus rendering the whole canon at any given period an infallible guide to true holiness and everlasting happiness[10].

Now, that the Scriptures were actually dictated by an inspiration of this kind may, I think, be inferred both from the reasonableness and from the necessity of the thing. It is *reasonable* that the sentiments and doctrines, developed in the Scriptures, should be suggested to the minds of the writers by the Supreme Being himself. They relate principally to matters concerning which the communicating information to men is worthy of God: and the more important the information communicated, the more it is calculated to impress mankind, to preserve from moral obliquity, to stimulate to holiness, to guide to happiness, the more reasonable is it to expect that God should make the communication in a manner free from every admixture of risk or error. Indeed, the notion of inspiration enters essentially into

[6] Luke, i. 3. John, xiv. 26. Jer. xxxi. 3.

[7] John, xx. 30, 31; xxi. 25. Rom. iv. 23, 24; xv. 4. 1 Cor. x. 6—11.

[8] Amos, i. and ix. Acts, xvii. 28. 1 Cor. xv. 33. Tit. i. 12.

[9] Gen. i. ii. iii. Lev. xxvi. Is. xli. 22, 23; xlv. 21; xlvi. 9, 10. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

[10] Deut. viii. 1—4. Ps. xix. 7—11; cxix. Matt. xxii. 29. Luke, xiv. 25—31. John, v. 39. Rom. xv. 4. 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. 2 Pet. i. 19.

our ideas of a Revelation from God; so that to deny inspiration is tantamount to affirming there is no Revelation. And why should it be denied? Is man out of the reach of him who created him? Has he, who gave man his intellect, no means of enlarging or illuminating that intellect? And is it beyond his power to illuminate and inform in an especial manner the intellects of some chosen individuals—or contrary to his wisdom, to preserve them from error when they communicate to others, either orally or by writing, the knowledge he imparted to them, not merely for their own benefit, but for that of the world at large, in all generations?

But farther, Inspiration is *necessary*. The necessity of Revelation has been evinced in a former letter; and the same reasoning, in connexion with what I have just remarked, establishes the necessity of inspiration. Besides this, the *subjects* of Scripture render inspiration necessary. Some past facts recorded in the Bible could not possibly have been known had not God revealed them. Many things are recorded there as future, that is, are predicted, which God alone could foreknow and foretell, which notwithstanding came to pass, and which, therefore, were foretold under divine inspiration. Others, again, are far above human capacity, and never could have been discovered by men: these, therefore, must have been delivered by divine inspiration. The authoritative language of Scripture, too, argues the necessity of inspiration, admitting the veracity of the writers. They propose things, not as matters for consideration, but for adoption; they do not leave us the alternative of receiving or rejecting; do not present us with their own thoughts; but exclaim, "*Thus saith the Lord*," and on that ground demand our assent. They must, of necessity, therefore, speak and write as they were "inspired by the Holy Ghost," or be impostors; and the last supposition is precluded by reasonings which I have repeatedly brought forward in these letters.

Very striking proofs of the inspiration of the Scriptures might be deduced from a consideration of their

matchless sublimity, their union of perspicuity with profundity, their piety, their pure and holy tendency, their efficacy, their harmony, and their miraculous preservation. But I shall leave you to reflect upon these at your leisure, and proceed to lay before you, as of no small weight, the testimony on this point of those who lived nearest the apostolic times. They may naturally be expected, so far I mean as is independent of the written word, to know more of the sentiments of those who, in regard to religious topics, had "the mind of Christ," than any Christians in subsequent ages. Consider in this view the weight of the following quotations:—

1. Clemens Romanus says, that "the apostles preached the Gospel, being *filled with the Holy Spirit:* that the Scriptures are the true word of the Spirit; that Paul wrote to the Corinthians things that were *true*, by the aid of the Spirit;" and that the Pentateuch, as well as all that the Jews received as Holy Scripture, "were indeed *the oracles of God.*"

2. Justin Martyr says, "that the Gospels were written by men *full of the Holy Ghost*, and that the sacred writers were moved by inspiration:" and in his argumentations he generally, if not always, assumes as incontrovertible the inspiration of the Old Testament.

3. Irenæus says, that "all the apostles as well as Paul received the Gospel *by divine Revelation;* and that by the will of God they delivered it to us as the foundation and pillar of our faith; that the Scriptures were *dictated by the Spirit of God*, and therefore it is wickedness to contradict them, and sacrilege to make any the least alteration in them."

4. Clemens Alexandrinus says, "We that have the Scriptures are *taught of God;* that the Scriptures are established by the authority of God; that the whole Scripture is the law of God; and that they are all divine."

5. Origen says, that "the Scriptures proceeded from the Holy Spirit; that there is not *one tittle in them but what expresses a divine wisdom;* that there is nothing in

the Law, or the Prophets, or the Gospels, or the Epistles, which did not proceed from the fulness of the Spirit; that we ought with all the faithful to say that the Scriptures are divinely inspired; that the Gospels were admitted as divine in all the churches of God; that the Scriptures are no other than the oracles of God; that, if a man would not confess himself to be an *infidel*, he must admit the inspiration of the Scriptures."

6. TERTULLIAN lays down as a fundamental principle in disputing with heretics, "that the truth of doctrines is to be determined by Scripture;" and affirms most positively, "that Scripture is the basis of faith; that all Christians prove their doctrines out of the Old and New Testament; and that the majesty of God dictated what Paul wrote."

7. EUSEBIUS quotes with approbation a writer more ancient than himself, who says, "they who corrupt the sacred Scriptures, abolish the standard of the ancient faith, neglecting the words of the divine writings, out of regard to their own reasonings;" and afterwards, "that they either do not believe that the Holy Spirit uttered the Divine Scriptures, and then they are *infidels;* or think themselves wiser than the Spirit, and in that case seem to be possessed."

8. THEOPHILUS ANTIOCHENUS says, that "the evangelists and apostles wrote by the same Spirit that inspired the prophets."

9. Nearly all the other Christian writers in the first three centuries, whose performances have wholly or partly reached us, speak of the Scriptures as *divine*, call them the *Holy* Scriptures, the *sacred fountain*, the *divine fountains of salvation*, &c. evidently implying their inspiration. And in those early ages the whole church agreed in sentiment, that no books should be received into the Canon of Scripture of whose *inspiration* there was any doubt.[11].

[11] The curious reader may consult farther the testimonies collected by Dr. Whitby, vol. i. Pref., by Dr. Lardner in the Second Part of his Credibility, Dr. Doddridge in his Lectures on Divinity, and in his Family Expositor, vol. iii.

Thus, then, we see, that in the primitive ages the universal opinion was in favour of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Let us next inquire how far this opinion grows naturally out of an examination of the Scriptures themselves. Considered in relation to the present subject, the books of Scripture fall under three classes:— the prophetical books; the historical books of the Old Testament; and the New Testament, being in part historical, and in part doctrinal.

Now, as to the prophetical books, their divine authority and their inspiration follow at once from the completion of several of the predictions they contain: the entire fulfilment of the whole is not essential to the argument.

The inspiration of the New Testament may be inferred from the language of our Lord, and that of the apostles. Thus, Jesus Christ promised extraordinary assistance to his apostles. He promissed them "the Comforter," "the Holy Spirit," "the Spirit of Truth," who should "testify of him," should "teach them all things, bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever Christ had said unto them, should guide them into all truth, should abide with them for ever, and show them things to come[12]." Again, he says, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also [being so assisted] shall bear witness[13]." From these passages it is but fair and reasonable to conclude, that the aid of this Heavenly Guide was to be vouchsafed them on all suitable occasions; and surely no occasions could render it more expedient than when they were engaged in delivering *written* instructions, whether in the form of Gospels or of Epistles, which were intended for the edification of the Christian church till "time should be no longer." In fact, the Spirit could not abide with *them* for ever, in relation to the church, in any other way than by preserving the word they delivered from such human or diabolical depre-

[12] John, xiv. 16—26; xvi. 13. [13] John, xv. 26, 27.

ciation and corruption as might render it injurious instead of being salutary.

It will also be worth our while to notice the remarkable language in which Jesus Christ promises his apostles the extraordinary assistance of the Spirit while they are defending his cause before magistrates. "Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist. Take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given to you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you[14]." If this were to be the case when they pleaded before magistrates, how much more reason is there to conclude, that when they were writing for the use of all future generations, it was not so much they that wrote, as the *Spirit of the Father* who dictated to them, and thus *wrote by them*. For the occasion is evidently much more important in the latter instance than in the former: an error in their writings would have a much more extensive, permanent, and injurious influence than any error that could occur in a pleading or argument, necessarily of transient impression, before a magistrate. In truth, it is quite incredible that they who were assisted by the Holy Spirit, in their pleadings and when they preached, should be deserted by that Spirit when they committed what they had preached to writing. It is equally incredible that they who possessed the gift of discerning spirits should be endowed with no gift of discerning the truth of facts. We have an instance on record in which St. Peter detected a falsehood by the light of inspiration: and surely it was not of less importance to the church, that the apostles and evangelists should be enabled to detect falsehoods in the history of our Saviour's life, than that St. Peter should be enabled to detect Ananias's lie about the sale of an estate. The apostles were led by the Spirit

[14] Luke, xxi. 14, 15. Matt. x. 19, 20. Mark, xiii. 11.

into "all truth;" would they be permitted to lead the whole church for ages into error? Would they be permitted to leave behind them as authentic memoirs of their master's life and discourses, and of the doctrines which he appointed them to teach, narratives compiled without judgment or selection, and without the guidance of the Spirit he promised to confer upon them?

Let it be considered in this connexion, that even the apostles who had enjoyed the benefit of the society, the example, the instruction of their Divine Master, were not competent to become even oral teachers in his kingdom, until the effusion of the Spirit at the day of Pentecost; and that, *à fortiori*, new converts, whether Jews or Gentiles, would, without extraordinary aid, have been less competent than they. The "hundred and twenty" also received the Spirit; for it is said, "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." That is, *they* were inspired to speak with truth; and hence, as the apostles were endowed with the highest illumination, theirs was an inspiration suited to the exigences of what were meant to be permanent records for the instruction of the church.

We who not only are favoured with the complete canon of Scriptures; but, by means of the art of printing, can multiply copies to every imaginable extent with the utmost facility, are seldom led to ask how correct religious instruction could be given, or how the ordinary services of religious assemblies could be conducted, before the sacred penmen had delivered in writing the new covenant revelation. Yet that was neither a short nor an unimportant interval in the annals of the church.

Matthew's Gospel was written some say eight, others fifteen years, after our Lord's ascension. The Gospels by Mark and Luke, some years later. The book of the Acts, still later. John's Gospel, probably not until after his return from his banishment in Patmos. The earliest of the Epistles is not supposed to have been written

sooner than seventeen or eighteen years after the ascension. And it took nearly forty years more to publish the remainder of them. A much longer period would be required to circulate the whole of these books, or nearly the whole, historical and doctrinal, even partially among the churches, that is, so that each church should possess *one* complete series of the books which constitute what we now denominate The New Testament.

Now, during all this interval, how was religious truth diffused? how were the facts of the evangelical history announced? how were the praises of God celebrated? how were disorders in the church prevented or corrected? how were errors detected? how, in brief, were the purposes of public worship ensured, the proprieties of public worship maintained; or how, indeed, *could* they be, without supernatural illumination, without those "manifestations of the Spirit" in the church assemblies by which the primitive Christians were edified, encouraged, and preserved in the faith?

It is plain, from the Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians and the Ephesians, that spiritual gifts of extraordinary energy, diversity, and utility, in the furtherance of truth and the detection of error, were possessed, not merely by the apostles, but by several persons in every religious assembly. It is not necessary to my present argument to attempt a classification or explication of those extraordinary powers; but, referring you to the researches of *D'Oyley*, *Macknight*, and *Macleod* (especially the latter) upon this interesting topic, I simply entreat you to consider whether those gifts and endowments, conferred not upon a few, but upon many Christians (see their enumeration in 1 Cor. xii.), were not *absolutely necessary* for the preservation and extension of the church in that early part of its history of which I am now speaking?

And if neither the existence, nor the *necessary* existence, of these gifts among ordinary Christians can be reasonably doubted, why should any one hesitate to allow that the Apostles, to whom a still more moment-

ous task was assigned, received also their appropriate illumination from that "selfsame Spirit which divideth to every man severally as he will?"

Under the old covenant dispensation, when an individual was selected for an extraordinary undertaking, his commission seems often to have been sealed with the inspiring assurance, *I will be with thee.* Maimonides asserts that *supernatural power* was regarded as conveyed by this striking formula. And thus, indeed, we find that it endowed *Moses* with political wisdom and the spirit of a wise governor; *Joshua* and *Gideon*, with military courage and prowess; *Jeremiah*, with supernatural constancy, and undaunted boldness in enforcing his reproofs and asserting his authority.

It is not, I think, unnatural to infer that our Lord, when giving his commission of ineffable mercy to eleven *Jews*, to "go forth, and teach all nations," employed the same language[15] to convince them that in their arduous undertaking they should receive such communications of Holy influence and illumination, as should be in every respect commensurate with the importance of that commission, and the otherwise insuperable difficulties which it involved. Nor were those communications withheld. It is evident that, in order to ensure the ends for which the apostles were appointed and sent forth, besides the ability of confirming the truth of their mission by the occasional exercise of miraculous energy, it was necessary that they and their assistants should be *understood* by the inhabitants of every country which they should visit in the course of their ministry; that they should be furnished with a clear and perfect knowledge of the facts and doctrines they were selected to announce, and of the institutions which they were to establish; and that, whether they communicated the knowledge with which they were thus endowed, by preaching or

[15] Maimon. Doctr. Perplex, p. 2, c. 38. Gen. xxxix. 2, 3, 21. Exod. iii. 12. Josh. i. 5. Judges, vi. 13—16. Jer. i. 6—8. Matt. xxviii. 20.

other oral instruction, or in writings, historical or epistolary, they were preserved from error by the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit. Thus every degree of inspiration proceeded from God: and though *inspired* men reasoned in the manner others do, and sometimes[16] even marked the degrees of evidence in their reasonings, yet they might justly regard their conclusions as infallible, from the irresistible conviction that their reasoning faculties were enlightened, elevated, and expanded, that they might adequately comprehend and treat "the deep things of God." "Not," says St. Paul, "that we are sufficient of ourselves, λογισασθαι, to reason any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." This sufficiency gave them their wonderful success; and it will be our highest wisdom to peruse their writings, providentially handed down for our instruction, with the entire persuasion that they are not merely interesting, impressive, and instructive, but divine.

In estimating the authority claimed by the *eight* writers of the New Testament, we must not only consider their unbroken, unimpeachable integrity, but that *five* of them were of the number of the apostles to whom the promises just cited were made. Of the other three, one, namely, Luke, is generally admitted to have been of the *seventy* disciples sent out by Christ, and who received the promise of divine superintendence and inspiration recorded in his Gospel[17]. With regard to Mark, if his own immediate inspiration cannot be established, that of his Gospel can, since it has never been questioned that he wrote under the superintendence of Peter, an inspired apostle. There then remains only Paul, who repeatedly and solemnly asserts his own inspiration, and his equality in every respect with all the other apostles: who even taught before he conversed with them, recorded words of our Lord referred to by *none* of the Evangelists, and appealed to miracles publicly wrought by himself in proof of his divine commission.

[16] Heb. vii. 14, 15. [17] Luke, xii. 11, 12. See also Luke, x. 16.

That the apostles themselves had a firm persuasion that they wrote under Divine inspiration is evident from a great variety of texts; to some of the most important of which I shall refer you[18], that you may consult them carefully, and allow them their full impression upon your mind. They professed themselves to be inspired by God, in books whose genuineness and authenticity we have established; and God has attested their commission by miracles; therefore we are bound to believe them. You will find, too, that the apostles considered themselves as communicating to the world a *perpetual* rule of faith and practice, which would be comprehended by all except the finally impenitent. If, say they, "if *our* Gospel be under a veil, it is veiled to those that destroy themselves[19]." On these accounts, as it should seem, they preferred themselves before the *Prophets*, not merely of their own but of preceding times, saying[20], "God hath set in the church, first, *Apostles;* secondly, *Prophets;* thirdly, *Teachers:*" language which could not properly have been employed, had the apostles been inspired only to preach and not to write; for in that case they would manifestly be *inferior* to the Prophets, who in their writings, as well as their oral addresses, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

These observations will, I trust, convince you that the historical and doctrinal parts of the New Testament, and the prophetical portions of both the Old and New Testaments, contain, in the complete sense of the phrase, "*the word of God.*" It remains that I state to you two or three cogent reasons for admitting that the *whole* of the received Jewish Scriptures is entitled to the same character, and of course to the same submis-

[18] 1 Cor. ii. 10—16; iii. 21—23; xi. 23; xiv. 37. 2 Cor. ii. 10; iii. 5, 6; iv. 8; xi. 7; xiii. 3. Gal. i. 11, 12. Eph. iii. 3—5. 10; iv. 11, 12. 1 Tim. i. 11. 1 Pet. i. 12, 21. 2 Pet. iii. 2, 15, 16. John, x. 35. 1 John, ii. 20; iv. 6. Rev. i. 1, &c. 1 Thes. i. 5. 2 Thes. ii. 13.

[19] 2 Cor. iv. 3. See the original. [20] 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. ii. 20.

sion of intellect and of heart. In order to this I shall first lay before you the language of Dr. Doddridge in his valuable Dissertation on the Inspiration of the Scriptures: "The inspiration, and consequently the genuineness and credibility, of the *Old* Testament, may be certainly inferred from that of the *New*, because our Lord and his apostles were so far from charging the Scribes and Pharisees (who on all proper occasions are censured so freely) with having introduced into the sacred volume any merely human compositions; that, on the contrary, they not only recommend a diligent and constant perusal of these Scriptures, as of the greatest importance to men's eternal happiness, but speak of them as *divine oracles*, and as written by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of the authors.

"I desire that the following list of Scriptures may be attentively consulted and reflected on in this view. I might have added a great many more, indeed *several hundreds*, in which the sacred writers of the New Testament argue from those of the Old in such a manner, as nothing could have justified but a firm persuasion that they were *divinely inspired*. Now as the Jews always allowed that 'the testimony of an *approved prophet* was sufficient to *confirm the mission* of one who was supported by it,' so I think every reasonable man will readily conclude, that no inspired person can erroneously attest *another* to be *inspired;* and indeed the very definition of *plenary inspiration* absolutely excludes any room for cavilling on so plain a head. I throw the particular passages which I choose to mention into the margin below[21]; and he must be a very

[21] John, v. 39. Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10. Mark, xii. 24. Luke, x. 26, 27. Matt. v. 17, 18; xxi. 42; xxii. 29, 31, 43; xxiv. 15; xxvi. 54, 56. Luke, i. 67, 69, 70; xvi. 31; xxiv. 25, 27. John, vi. 31; x. 35. Acts, ii. 16, 25; iii. 22, 24; iv. 25; xvii. 11; xviii. 24, 28; xxviii. 25. Rom. iii. 2, 10; ix. 17, 25, 27, 29; x. 5, 11, 16; xv. 4; xvi. 26. 1 Cor. x. 11. 2 Cor. iv. 13; vi. 16, 17. Gal. iii. 8. 1 Tim. v. 18. 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. Heb. i. 1, 5—13; iii. 7; Jam. ii. 8; iv. 5, 6. 1 Pet. i. 10—12. 2 Pet. i. 19—21.

indolent inquirer into a question of so much importance, who does not think it worth his while to turn carefully to them; unless he have already such a conviction of the argument that it should need no farther to be illustrated or confirmed."

But, before you totally dismiss the subject, meditate upon a few important particulars, in which those portions of the Old Testament which are not altogether or principally prophetic, differ from all compositions that are merely human.

Thus, 1st. They do not accommodate themselves to the tastes, inclinations, and prejudices of mankind. For, instead of fostering the voluptuousness of men, they extirpate it; at least, that is their tendency; as well as to eradicate injustice, self-love, and all unholy passions. Instead of gratifying our pride, they tend to overthrow it, by presenting a most vivid picture of our weakness, misery, and corruption. Instead of feeding the vain curiosity of those who would fain know the nature of things, that they may have the reputation which accrues from the knowledge, or become wise, that they may be thought wise; the Hebrew Scriptures teach us that this knowledge is but *vanity and vexation of spirit.* Instead of exhibiting to us the niceties, and dwelling upon the distinctions, of polished life, they present an amiable simplicity of manners, and teach us that "though a man have riches, and wealth, and honour, so that he can glut his soul with what he desireth," yet if his wishes centre and terminate in these, "he cometh in with vanity and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness." Instead of exhorting us to love virtue merely for its own sake, or for some other motive taken from the glory which will redound from the practice of it, the Hebrew teachers soar much higher, and exhort us to love virtue from love to God, and to *rejoice* not more at the remembrance of his mercy than "*at the remembrance of his holiness.*" Does not this argue an emanation from the "fountain of lights?"

2dly. They do not write to gratify their own prejudices. Thus Moses believed that God had set apart the Israelites as his chosen people, depositing his oracles in their hands, and honouring them with his covenant. *What other nation*, says he, *has God so dealt with?* Yet Moses speaks of Melchisedech, king of Salem, whom he calls *a priest of the most high God*, although he lived among other nations, and was not of the family of Abraham. Thus, also, what he relates of Abimelech, that he had feared God; and of Balaam, that he had received the gift of prophecy, though he had daily conversed with idolatrous nations, was equally repugnant to his prejudices. So again, Moses was a firm believer, and an unequivocal assertor, of the unity of God. How is this reconcilable with Gen. iii. 22; xviii. 17—20; Gen. xiv. xvii. xviii. xxviii. xxxi. xlv. xlix? with Exod. iii. 1. 2, 14; v. 3; vi. 2. 3, &c.? Jehovah is confounded with an angel; a man is called Jehovah; creatures are invested with the attributes of the Creator of the universe; and this, in the writings of *Moses*, a man of great natural talents, enriched with all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and whose great design was to excite the Israelites to glorify God, nor "ever give his glory to another." Much that was said by Joshua and others is equally repugnant to all their opinions and prejudices: would they, could they, have thus run counter to themselves, but in consequence of an irresistible superior influence?

Then, 3dly. Not to dwell upon the repugnancies between the belief of the Jewish prophets, as to the Israelites being God's peculiar people, and their reiterated predictions of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the *universal* diffusion of divine truth and knowledge; let the attention be simply directed to a few predictions comprised in the Pentateuch. How, but in virtue of inspiration, properly so called, could it be announced in the time of Moses, nay, *by* Moses (for to ascribe his books to any other author is the refinement of absurdity), that God would raise a strange nation against

the Jews, that they should be dispersed among other people, who should seduce them to idolatry during their captivity, that their cities should be razed to the ground, that in the extremity of famine some of them should feed upon their own children: but that they should be converted to God, and that God would then bring back the captives of Israel, and gather them from among other people? All these particulars, with others which I do not now enumerate, are announced, as you will recollect, in one book, that of Deuteronomy. I should quite despair of bringing any arguments to bear upon the mind which is proof against the considerations to which I have thus adverted.

You will perceive that I have not, in this letter, constructed any part of my argument, so as to include the idea of the universal verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. I have not done this, because I greatly doubt the propriety of taking such high and exclusive ground. I question not the motives of those pious and learned men who maintain not only that the very words in which the sacred writers expressed themselves were universally suggested by the Holy Spirit, but that this suggestion of every word is essential to the plenary inspiration of the whole Bible; yet I cannot but question the discretion of such a procedure. Would there be no difficulty, for example, in reconciling the variations in the Decalogue in Exodus and Deuteronomy (see especially Exodus xx. 10, 11, and Deuteron. v. 14, 15), upon such an hypothesis, and would not equal, or greater difficulties occur in the inspired narrations of the four evangelists? If this high position were maintained, it would follow, in the first place, that *no* writings but the originals could properly serve the purpose of a divine revelation, since every transcriber is liable to errors, and no copy has been found without them. It would, moreover, follow that the originals being unadapted for general use, and being, besides, long since destroyed, there is *now* no such thing as a competent Divine revelation in the

world. All copies would be without authority, and much more would all translations. Thus it is that extremes meet, and that the advocates for a universal verbal inspiration produce the mischief they are most anxious to avoid, and, by attempting to cut off all doubt, engender doubts which otherwise would not exist.

Here, then, may safely terminate our inquiry into the *inspiration* of Scripture. We have ascertained that it is the Word of God: and, if we read it attentively, we shall soon find it profitable "for doctrine, for instruction, for reproof." Let us, therefore, my friend, believe and rejoice "that the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath thus appeared to all men; to the end that, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly,* in the present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ[22]."

LETTER XI.

On some of the most plausible Objections urged against the Truth and Divine Authority of the Scriptures.

It has been my object, in the preceding letters, to convince you that the collection of writings received by Christians as sacred and authoritative, is indeed genuine, authentic, and inspired. I shall be happy if this great object be obtained. At all events, I trust I have shown that the Christian religion has the strongest *probability* in its favour; and, if that be the case, you will at once see that the rejection of it is the height of folly. In the economy of human life we act almost entirely upon probabilities; and in most instances, I believe, it will be found that the more important the tendency or the result of a particular action or series of actions may be, the slighter need be the preponderance of probability to determine our adopting it. It is probable, for example, that we may be heirs at law to a

[22] Tit. ii. 11—13.

valuable estate: therefore we examine into the legal instruments which ascertain our title to such estate. It is probable a particular line of conduct will be successful: therefore we pursue it. It is probable a certain commercial speculation will be productive: therefore we put it in practice. It is probable a certain regimen will be highly injurious to our health: therefore we abandon it. It is probable a particular medicine will be beneficial to the constitution: therefore we have recourse to it. It is probable the house we inhabit will fall: therefore we quit it. And thus it might be shown in a variety of other instances, that where there appears a presumption however low on one side of an inquiry, and none on the other,—where there appears a preponderancy however slight in favour of one side,—this determines the point, even in matters of speculation, and usually impels to action in matters of practice. But alas! this wise and prudential rule of conduct is only applied *generally* in regard to the things of the present world: for although it is probable, nay, *infinitely* probable, that the Christian religion is true, that the evils against which we are warned in the Bible will be our portion unless we "flee from the wrath to come," that the ineffable and interminable happiness it promises believers may be ours, unless we thoughtlessly or contemptuously spurn it from us; yet, in direct opposition to the conduct discreet persons adopt in every other concern, men disbelieve the evidence, despise the warnings, laugh at the threatenings, reject the blessings, held out to them in the Scriptures, go through life wrapped in an impenetrable insensibility to eternal things; and at death "rush upon the thick bosses of God's buckler," and plunge naked into "fierceness and darkness," instead of bathing in those perennial "rivers of pleasure" which flow from the throne of God, and to which the condescending Deity had invited them!

We do not deny that the scheme of revelation has its difficulties: for if the things of nature are often difficult to comprehend, it would be strange indeed if

supernatural matters were so simple, and obvious, and suited to finite capacities, as never to startle or puzzle us at all. Origen remarked, with his usual sagacity, that "he who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it as are found in the constitution of nature:" and this obviously suggests the reflection, that he who denies the Bible to have come from God on account of these difficulties, may, for exactly the same reason, deny that the world was formed by him. Indeed the Bible could not have been, as many declarations included in it show it to be, —*a touchstone by which to try men's honest dispositions*[1], were it so free from difficulties that every man's faith would be *inevitably* excited on the perusal.

To reject Christianity, therefore, on account of its difficulties, is unreasonable: because it is to reject it for possessing what its own writings declare to be essential to its nature and purpose: and to proceed by way of objections drawn from these difficulties is *unfair;* because it is walking in a path in which a man can never be stopped unless he *please*, and in which, though he travel for ever, it is impossible he can arrive at truth and certainty. Let him propose a thousand objections in succession, and suppose nine hundred and ninety-nine of them to be answered satisfactorily; still the one which he retains, and which he supposes to be unanswerable, because he has not received an answer to it, will be deemed a sufficient plea to justify his continuing incredulous. He will boast of this single objection, though probably the point to which it relates may be one which it is impossible for us to place in a proper light, unless we could see and know as God does. "Many and painful are the researches usually necessary to be made for settling points of this kind. Pertness and ignorance may ask a question in three lines,

[1] Ut ita sermo evangelii tanquam lapis esset Lydius ad quem ingenia sanabilia explorarentur. Grotius De Ver. Rel. Christ. lib. ii. sect. 19.

which it will cost learning and ingenuity thirty pages to answer. When this is done, the same question shall be triumphantly asked again the next year, as if nothing had ever been written upon the subject. And as people in general, for one reason or another, like short objections better than long answers, in this mode of disputation (if it can be styled such) the odds must ever be against us; and we must be content with those for our friends, who have honesty and erudition, candour and patience, to study both sides of the question [2]."

You must not, however, infer from these observations, that I wish to avoid all discussion of the objections urged against Scripture. They are, it is true, too multifarious in their nature to render it possible we should meet them all; and many of them would lead us into too wide a field of inquiry, to admit of their being considered in the compass of a letter. Still it may be proper to select a few which you have probably heard advanced, and to present you with such answers as have been given, or may be given, to them; that you may judge how trifling some of them are, and how satisfactory solutions may be furnished to others, the most specious and plausible, that have been brought forward.

Obj. I. It has been thought strange that God should select, as the principal recipients of his favours, so obscure a people as the ancient Jews were; a nation described by Voltaire as "wretched, ever ignorant, and vulgar, and strangers to the arts."

The following reply was made to Voltaire: and it is unnecessary we should seek for any other, until the disciples of Voltaire and Hume shall have shown us that this is weak and unsatisfactory. "Does it become you, a writer of the eighteenth century, to charge the ancient Hebrews with ignorance? A people, who, while your barbarous ancestors, whilst even the Greeks and Latins, wandering in the woods, could scarcely procure for themselves clothing and a settled subsistence, already possessed all arts of necessity, and some of

[2] Horne's Letters on Infidelity, p. 82.

mere pleasure; who not only knew how to feed and to rear cattle, till the earth, work upon wood, stone, and metals, weave cloths, dye wool, embroider stuffs, polish and engrave on precious stones; but who even then, adding to manual arts those of taste and refinement, surveyed land, appointed their festivals according to the motions of the heavenly bodies, and ennobled their solemnities by the pomp of ceremonies, by the sound of instruments, music and dancing; who even then committed to writing the history of the origin of the world, that of their own nation, and their ancestors; who had poets and writers skilled in all the sciences then known, great and brave commanders, a pure worship, just laws, a wise form of government: in short, this was *the only one of all ancient nations that has left us authentic monuments of genius and of literature.* Can this nation be justly charged with *ignorance and inurbanity?*"

Obj. II. The books of Moses are scarcely mentioned by any ancient pagan writers; a circumstance which seems irreconcilable with the extreme antiquity assigned to them by Jewish and Christian authors.

They are, however, noticed by *some* writers of celebrity, as I showed in the letter on the genuineness of Scripture; so that this objection is overthrown. But, even though reference could not be made to a single heathen author who speaks of Moses, it would be unfair to infer from thence that Moses never existed, and that the books distinguished by his name are spurious. Neither Herodotus nor Thucydides ever mention Rome, though the conquests of the Roman people were in the times of those historians extended far and wide: would it not be thought extremely unreasonable to affirm, on this account, that the received histories of Rome are fabulous?

Obj. III. The massacres and desolations which marked the expulsion of the Canaanites from their land, and led to the establishment of the Israelites in it, could never be authorized by the good and merciful

Governor of the universe; and, of consequence, those parts of the Old Testament history which relate these horrid stories must be rejected.

So have argued Morgan, Tindal, Bolingbroke, Paine, and many others; yet it may be shown that these transactions were calculated for a beneficial purpose, even for the general advantage of mankind; and were, therefore, neither inconsistent with the justice of God, nor with the usual proceedings of Divine providence. Let the objectors to this portion of the Old Testament history consider:

1. That God, as the offended Creator of the Canaanites, had a right to their forfeited lives, and therefore might as well destroy them and their posterity by the sword of the Israelites, as by famine, pestilence, fire and brimstone rained from heaven, or any other calamity appearing more obviously to come from himself.

2. The unparalleled wickedness of this people, especially as aggravated by the destruction of Sodom, was such as made the execution inflicted upon them a useful lesson to neighbouring nations[3].

3. The people of those ages were affected by no proof of the power of the gods which they worshiped, so deeply as by their giving them victory in war. Hence, the destruction of the Canaanites by the Israelites tended to convince surrounding nations, and all who were observers and spectators of what passed, 1st. That the God of Israel was a real God: 2dly. That the gods which other nations worshiped were either no gods, or had no power against the God of Israel. 3dly. That it was he, and he alone, who had both the power and the will to exterminate from before his face both nations and individuals, who gave themselves up to the crimes and abominations for which the Canaanites could not but be notorious. Destruction from an earthquake, or a plague, might not have been attributed to divine agency at all, or not to the interposition of the God of Israel.

4. Had not the extermination been complete, those

[3] Compare Gen. xv. 16. Lev. xviii. 20—28. Jude, i. 4—7. Wisd. xii. 3—7. Acts, xiii. 19. Judges, ii. 1—5. 19—23.

old inhabitants which were left might have seduced the new comers by degrees into the same crimes and corruptions. Vice, and especially that of the licentious kind, is astonishingly infectious; of which striking proofs are furnished in the last of the chapters just quoted.

5. That the punishment was preceded by mercy: the forbearance of God had been manifested towards their "abominable *customs*" long, and Divine judgments were not executed till their "wickedness was *full*."

6. This signal exercise of Divine punishment is accompanied by evidence tending to show that God's abhorrence and treatment of crimes is impartial, without distinction, and without respect of nations or persons. It served likewise as an awful lesson even to the "Jews, the people of God," themselves; they being over and over again reminded, that notwithstanding they were the appointed instruments of extermination, if they followed similar practices they must expect a like fate. "Ye shall not walk in the way of the nations which I cast out before you: for they committed all those things, and, therefore, I abhorred them: as the nations which the Lord destroyed before your face, *so shall ye perish*, because ye were not obedient to the voice of the Lord your God."—The Israelites would thus be more strongly impressed with an abhorrence of the abominations of idolatry, and this impression would subserve the design of keeping them a *distinct people*, adhering to the worship of the true God, so beneficial to them in particular, and ultimately so gracious to mankind in general.

7. The miracles wrought in favour of the Israelites, not only at their coming out of Egypt, but at their entrance on Canaan, proved that they were indeed commissioned as God's executioners: and consequently that their conduct was not to be a model for conquerors in ordinary cases.

8. We may remark, farther, that had any among the Canaanites surrendered themselves at discretion to the God of Israel, a new case would have arisen not expressly provided for in the law, in which, it is pro-

bable, God, being consulted by Urim and Thummim, would have spared the lives of such penitents; and either have incorporated them with the Israelites by circumcision, or have ordered them a settlement in some neighbouring country, as the family of Rahab seems to have had.

But it may be objected, after all, that these arguments do not show that it is not repugnant to God's moral justice "to doom to destruction the crying or smiling *infants* of the Canaanites." To this we reply:—

9. Why is it not maintained repugnant to his moral justice, that he should suffer crying or smiling infants to be swallowed up by an earthquake, drowned by an inundation, consumed by a fire, starved by famine, or destroyed by pestilence? The earth, at the command of God, opened, and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with their wives, their sons, and their little ones. "Two she-bears" destroyed "forty-two *children*" who had just before been "mocking" Elisha. These, as well as the destruction of the Canaanites, are deemed so repugnant to God's moral justice, that infidels spurn, as spurious, the books in which the circumstances are related. When Catania, Lima, and Lisbon were severally destroyed by earthquakes, men, with their wives, their sons, and their little ones, were swallowed up alive: why do not these inquirers spurn, as spurious, the book of nature, in which these facts are written? The latter circumstances are as apparent infringements upon the moral justice of God as the former; and a person would just as forcibly, upon this ground, argue against the latter being facts as against the former. Besides, it should be recollected, with respect to "crying and smiling infants," that their early death, so far from being a punishment, as these objectors represent it, might be an act of the greatest mercy, since it might save them from the dreadful future punishment due to the actual guilt they would probably have incurred had they reached maturity[4].

[4] Pantologia, art. *Canaanites.*

OBJ. IV. The story of Abraham's offering up his only son Isaac is so highly unnatural, that neither it nor the book which advances it as true can possibly be reckoned credible.

There is nothing so very unreasonable in this story as the objectors seem to imagine. Abraham had himself received so many divine communications, and had been acquainted with so many which had been made to his ancestors, that he could easily ascertain whether the command really came from God; and God could manifestly accompany it by such marks of his power and will, as would leave Abraham no room to entertain a single doubt about it. Abraham could as little doubt of God's right to Isaac's life, nay, the youth himself could as little doubt it, as of his care of him in another state. These were essential parts of the patriarchal religion. Still it must be acknowledged, that great faith was required in Abraham, before he could overcome his natural affection and tenderness for Isaac by a principle of obedience to God, and trust God for the accomplishment of his promise when he commanded him to destroy the only apparent means of accomplishing it. Had not Abraham been highly advanced in faith and obedience, he could not have sustained so severe a trial; but such a trial would greatly confirm both. And thus this history is so far from being liable to objection, that it is peculiarly conformable to those methods, which mere reason and experience dictate as well suited for advancing and perfecting true religion in the soul. When the typical nature of the whole is also considered, it seems very difficult indeed to question the divine authority of the appointment. And in the previous steps over which Abraham passed in order to obtain the blessings conferred upon him, we have a striking adumbration and example of that faith, patience, and gradual advancement in the spiritual life, which are essential to all those who hope to be "blessed with faithful Abraham."

As to the particular cavil drawn from the supposed

delusive declaration of Abraham to his servants, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and *come again to you;*" it receives an obvious reply in the language of the Apostle Paul. Abraham knew and most probably *believed* that "God was able to raise his son up, even from the dead[5];" and therefore that he should return to his servants with his sacrificed though living son.

Obj. V. The Mosaic chronology is unworthy of credit, since it makes the era of the creation only about four thousand years earlier than the Christian era; while the established chronology of the Chinese carries us back to a point of time earlier by many thousands of years than that assigned by Moses to the creation.

That this objection may be of any weight we must give greater credit to monstrous chronologies, containing nothing but names without actions, than to regular methodical histories, which relate in succession all the most important events occurring amongst a particular people for thousands of years;—we must forget that the Chinese pretensions are inconsistent with themselves;—we must forget that it has been proved that the earliest Chinese observations are those of two fixed stars, one in the winter solstice, the other in the vernal equinox, in the reign of their king *Yao*, who lived after the Mosaic date of the General Deluge, that is, two thousand three hundred and fifty-seven years before Christ[6]; we must forget that Cassini assigned the date of another of their most early observations to be only two thousand and twelve years before Christ[7]; assuming the correctness of the Chinese accounts of those observations. To give force to this objection, we must, farther, disregard the testimony of M. de Guignes, who has very recently shown, most satisfactorily, that the existence of the Chinese *empire* cannot be traced farther back than five hundred and twenty-nine years before

[5] Gen. xxii. 5. Heb. ix. 19.
[6] Bianchini Histor. Univers. cap. 17.
[7] Burn's Officer's Complete Armour, p. 32.

Christ[8]; and we must equally disregard the similarly decisive evidence of President Goguet in the following passage:

"What dependence can we place upon the certainty of Chinese chronology for the early times, when we see these people unanimously avow, that one of their greatest monarchs, interested in the destruction of the ancient traditions, and of those who preserved them, caused *all* the books which did not treat of agriculture, or of medicine, or of divination, to be burnt; and applied himself, for many years, to destroy whatever could recall the knowledge of the times anterior to his reign? About forty years after his death, they wanted to re-establish the historical documents. For that purpose, they gathered together, say they, the *hear-says* of old men. They discovered, it is added, some fragments of books which had escaped the general conflagration. They joined these various scraps together as they could, and vainly endeavoured to compose of them a regular history. It was not, however, till more than one hundred and fifty years after the destruction of all the monuments, that is to say, till the year 37 before Christ, that a complete body of the ancient history appeared. The author himself who composed it, *Sse-Ma-tsiene*, had the candour to own, that he had not found it possible to *ascend with certainty eight hundred years beyond the times in which he wrote*. Such is the unanimous confession of the Chinese[9]."

8 De Guignes's Voyages à Peking, &c. tom. i.

9 Goguet's Origin of Laws, Dr. Henry's translat. vol. iii. Similar pretensions have been set up for the antiquity of the Chaldeans and Egyptians, of whom it has been said that they had observed the motions of the stars for four hundred and seventy thousand years. This is easily said, and easily believed by those who would rather believe any thing than the Mosaic records: yet, as none gives to the art of writing so early a date, this could only be preserved by tradition, and the idea of a tradition of astronomical facts for four hundred and seventy thousand years is too absurd to need any refutation. Plutarch puts us in a ready way of estimating the whole, when, in his life of *Numa*, he says, "Though their year, according to some authors, con-

It is not a little curious, however, to mark the different ways in which unbelievers attack the authority of Scripture, in respect of the age it gives to the world. *Voltaire* is fiery, and even furious, in contending for the superior antiquity given by the Chinese, while *Laplace* insinuates, as if almost unconscious he was making any such insinuation, that the world cannot be above *half* as old as Moses makes it, and hunts about, very philosophically, for reasons to explain "la nouveauté du monde moral, dont les monumens *ne remontent guère au-delà de trois mille ans*[10].

OBJ. VI. The Scriptures contain so many inconsistencies, contradictions, and absurdities, that it is difficult to think them authentic, much less inspired.

This objection presents itself with a very formidable aspect, and will, therefore, require something more than a mere glance at it. Let me remark, then, first, as to those few and small apparent inconsistencies which are supposed to run counter to the notion of inspiration, or at least to restrict the inspiration of the Scriptures to its lowest sense, that they decrease daily, in proportion as the inquiries of learned men are extended farther; and that even if, in the originals, the Scriptures were perfectly exact and accordant in every particular, there would, notwithstanding, be some apparent difficulties, arising merely from our ignorance of ancient languages, customs, distant places, &c.; and, consequently, that if

sisted of four months, yet at first it was composed but of *one*, and contained but the course of a single moon. Thus their making a year of a single month, is the reason that the time elapsed since their origin seems extremely long; so that, though it is but lately that they first inhabited their country, yet they are reckoned the most ancient of all nations."

[10] Expos. du Système du Monde, liv. iv. chap. 4. Attempts have also been made to destroy the credibility of the Mosaic chronology, from the phenomena of volcanic lava, and the great length of time requisite to form a scanty surface of soil upon them; but these objections carry their own refutation with them; as has been shown by Mr. Gisborne, in his "Familiar Survey," note p. 515, and by the "Contemplative Philosopher," in vol. ii. No. 55.

difficulties arising from this source are not more numerous than may fairly be ascribed to our ignorance, they constitute in fact no objection at all. Besides, it must not be forgotten, that in other cases apparent inconsistencies, to a certain extent, exclude the supposition of forgery; because they, who bear testimony to that which is false, take care so to make their stories correspond, that there shall not be any apparent difference. It may be observed, moreover, that the principle of the objection goes much farther than the objectors themselves wish to carry it: for if, on account of some small irreconcilable differences, we may immediately disbelieve and reject whole books, then no book of history can possibly be believed. Yet Polybius, Livy, Plutarch, and others, in whom much greater contradictions are to be found, preserve their authority and credibility amongst us, as to most points: how much more reasonable then is it, that no such thing should destroy the credibility of those, who prove by their own writings that they had constantly a high regard to piety and truth.

With respect to the *discrepancies* between the four Gospels, which are so often and triumphantly urged in this connexion, it should be recollected that most of them arise from *omission*, which is always an uncertain ground of objection. Suetonius, Tacitus, and Dio Cassius have all written of the reign of Tiberius, and each has omitted many things mentioned by the rest. These discrepancies will also of course be more numerous when men write rather memoirs than histories; when they do not undertake to deliver, in the order of time, a regular account of *all* things of importance which the subject of the history did and said; but only such passages as were suggested by their *particular design* at the time of writing.

It has been often affirmed, that the *genealogies* given by Matthew and Luke are irreconcilable; but Dr. Hartley has proposed an hypothesis, which in my estimation removes all reasonable ground of hesitation. He,

supposes that Matthew mentions the real progenitors of *Joseph*, while Luke gives the series of those who were heirs to *David* by birthright; and that both transcribed principally from genealogical tables well known to the Jews of those times. Matthew, after David, takes Solomon, from whom Joseph lineally descended. Luke takes Nathan, upon whom, though he was younger than some others, and even than Solomon, it may be supposed the birthright was conferred, as in the instances of Jacob and Joseph. Matthew proceeds by real descent to Salathiel, at the time of the captivity; Luke proceeds by the heirs according to birthright, and comes to Salathiel likewise. Hence Hartley supposes, that Salathiel, Solomon's heir, was at that time David's also, by the extinction of all the branches of Nathan's family. Matthew then takes Zorobabel as Joseph's real progenitor; Luke takes him as heir or eldest son to Salathiel. Again, Matthew takes Abiud, the real progenitor; Luke mentions Rhesa, the eldest son; and thus Matthew proceeds by *lineal descent* to Joseph; Luke, by *heirs*, to the same Joseph; for it is to be supposed that, Heli dying without heirs male, Joseph became his heir by birthright, that is, heir to Zorobabel, that is, heir to David. If it be farther supposed, that the Virgin Mary was daughter to Heli, for which there appears to be some evidence, the solution will be more complete, and more agreeable to the Jewish customs. This solution is confirmed by the consideration that Matthew uses the word *ἐγέννησε*, which restrains the genealogy to lineal descent; whereas Luke uses the article *τοῦ*, which is very general[11]. It is farther confirmed also by the fact that Luke's descents, reckoning from David to Salathiel, are but about twenty-two years each; which is much too short for descents from father to son, but agrees very well to descents by birthright[12].

[11] Ἀβραὰμ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰσαάκ. Matt. i. 2.
Του Ἰσαὰκ τοῦ Ἀβραάμ. Luc. iii. 34.

[12] Hartley on Man, part ii. prop. 25. See also Christian Observer,

With regard to several passages apparently *contradictory*, the contradiction may be removed by a slight and justifiable change in the translation. Thus, in the often-cited example of the thirteenth chapter of John's Gospel, the expression in the second verse, "*And supper being ended*," is irreconcilable with the twenty-sixth verse, "*He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it*," according to the received translation. But let the phrase δείπνου γενομένου be rendered *supper being* COME, a sense which it will very well bear, and is consistent with the rendering given to the word in several other places[13], and every appearance of difficulty vanishes. In the version of Doddridge, and in the new version of the Socinians, this translation is given. In Dr. Campbell's translation, the passage is given verbally different, but essentially the same as the one proposed above, *i. e. while they were at supper:* thus reconciling the text with the twenty-sixth verse.

So again, with respect to supposed *absurdities*, it may be most positively affirmed, that they are such as for the most part disappear entirely, whenever we have obtained the knowledge requisite to make us competent judges of any specific case. Thus an instance, frequently urged, is taken from the prophet Jeremiah's description of the advance of Cyrus to effect the destruction of Babylon: "He shall come up as a *lion* from the *swelling of Jordan*[14]." Why, exclaim the animadverters triumphantly, why should a lion come from the swelling of a *river?* The answer is by no means difficult. Maundrell informs us, that the river Jordan may be considered as having two banks on one side of it, the lowermost of which is annually overflowed in March. After having descended the outermost bank,

Feb. 1812, p. 72, 73. It is proper to add, that an analogous explication of the difficulty, founded upon the distinction between "sons by nature" and "sons by the law," was given early in the second century by Africanus in an Epistle to Aristides. See Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. i. cap. 7.

[13] John, xxi. 4. Acts, xii. 18; xvi. 35; xxi. 50.

[14] Jeremiah, xlix. 19; l. 34.

the distance is about a furlong over the strand to the immediate bank of the river. This second bank is so covered with bushes and trees, such as tamarisk, willows, oleanders, &c. as to make a complete thicket, in which the various kinds of wild beasts, known in those regions, are wont to harbour themselves. These animals are driven from their covert by the periodical overflowings of the river; and of course burst from their hiding-places with an eagerness and fury, which but too appositely represent the passions that impel a conqueror in his approach to a city he has devoted to destruction[15].

Before I quit this part of our subject, you will expect me to notice the *absurd* story of "Jonah in the whale's belly." It *could* not be a whale that swallowed the prophet, says every objector, for whales are not found in the Mediterranean, and they have not throats capable of receiving a man. Suppose we admit that to be the case (though whales are *sometimes* found in the Mediterranean, and indeed thrown on the Italian shores), still the difficulty is not insurmountable. It might be replied, that the same God who preserved the

[15] See *Wells's Scripture Geography*, vol. ii. p. 152. And for illustrations of several other passages which have been made the subjects of infidel cavil, consult *Harmer's Observations*, *Burder's Oriental Customs*, the *Fragments* at the end of the new edition of *Calmet's Dictionary*; and *Horne's Introduction to the Critical Study of the Bible*, vol. i. In this latter mentioned work, there are many valuable remarks in reference to apparent contradictions—in circumstances, in chronology, in prophecies, in doctrine, between sacred and profane writers, and apparent contradictions to philosophy and the nature of things.

A variety of other objections have originated entirely in inattention to the *metaphorical* language of many parts of the Bible. To those who are in danger from this cause I would most earnestly recommend the very ingenious and interesting "Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Holy Scriptures," by the late truly learned, able, and excellent William Jones, M.A. of Nayland. The whole volume is highly instructive and entertaining: and it may be proper to add (as an apprehension of the contrary seems much to have impeded the circulation of the work), that it scarcely contains a single explication founded upon the author's peculiar tenets as a Hutchinsonian.

prophet alive within the fish, could have enlarged the swallow of the whale so as to receive him: yet, on the present occasion, there is no necessity for our infringing upon the judicious maxim of Horace—

Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus.

The word κετος in Greek, and Hebrew scholars inform us the analogous word *tanim*, may signify *any* large fish. The learned authors of the Universal History say, "The word here used[16] signifies no more *a whale* than any other *large fish* that has fins; and there is one commonly known in the Mediterranean by the name of the *carcharias* or *lamia*, of the bigness of a whale, but with such a *large throat* and belly, as to be able to swallow *the largest man whole.* There was one of this kind caught, within these thirty years, on the coast of Portugal, in whose *throat*, when stretched out, a man could stand upright[17]." Conformably with this, M. Pluche, speaking of the *shark*, says, "It has a very long gullet, and in the belly of it are sometimes found the *bodies of men* half eaten, sometimes *whole* and *entire*[18]." These extracts may suffice to show that the story of Jonah and the whale is not so pregnant with absurdity, as many of those who scoff where they ought to admire endeavour to persuade you it is.

Obj. VII. The Scripture doctrine of Redemption is inconsistent with the opinions now received of the magnitude of creation.

This was a favourite objection with Mr. Paine, urged with his usual confidence, and thrown into a shape the most ludicrous he could devise. On this objection, which I have been requested to notice here (though by so doing I must necessarily anticipate part of the topics of subsequent discussion), I have been favoured with the following remarks, which seem to comprehend all that a candid inquirer need wish for upon this subject.

From what is known by sensible experiment of the

16 Matt. xii. 40. 17 Univ. Hist. vol. x. p. 554.

18 Nature Displayed, vol. iii. p. 140. Bochart, vol. iii. p. 742.

world we live in, it is reasonable to infer, that in space there must be contained a multitude of similar worlds, so great, that, with respect to our limited faculties, it may be termed infinite. We may conclude, upon similar grounds, that in each of these worlds there exists a race of animals endued with reason; and most probably between us and the Fountain of Reason, there is an infinite gradation of rational creatures. Now all creatures must, necessarily, come short of the perfection of their Creator. They are, therefore, *fallible;* and being fallible, *must fall*, unless their defects are supplied by the aid of a nature more perfect than their own. Those who stray into a road leading away from the object at which they should arrive, must continually increase their distance. The natural consequence of falling is therefore *continual deterioration.* There is only one species of rational creatures which God has permitted to exist within the scope of our observation. We know that *they* have fallen, and we also know that it has pleased God, in his infinite goodness, to prepare for them a way of salvation, and to restore them by his power. Since all the counsels of God are perfect, and therefore uniform, eternal, and immutable, we may also conclude, with tolerable safety, from what we know in one instance to have been the law of his working, that such it has been, and will be, in every similar instance. We may therefore assume as certain that there is a way of salvation for each of the mighty multitude of rational species which exist in space and eternity, and that the provision for their restoration, as far as their case corresponds with ours, resembles that which has been made for *us*.

Three questions now present themselves. 1. How is this to be reconciled with the scheme for the redemption of mankind? 2. Are we to suppose that the *Son of God* has *suffered* as many times as there are species of rational beings? 3. If not, why was that method of cancelling guilt employed with regard to our earth? The answers to these seem to me very obvious.

It would be most unreasonable to conclude, on the general proposition, otherwise than we have stated already. Where the cases are the same, the same means will have been pursued. But those who take what is by many regarded as the narrowest view of the subject, and consider the suffering of Christ as a *price* paid to *cancel guilt* and to *redeem* mankind, need not surely be under any embarrassment in admitting that a similar sacrifice may have been offered whenever a similar occasion has occurred. Christ will still have laid down his life but once for *men*. That one oblation will have completed *their* redemption. And it is not in the least more derogatory from the infinite dignity and the infinite beatitude which we attribute to him, that he should have suffered a million of times, than that he should have suffered once. This answer comprehends the first two questions; and, of course, disposes of the third.

The difficulty in most of these matters is not in the things themselves, but in the expressions we must use. We may fancy that we comprehend a scheme of redemption (and we may doubtless comprehend it with sufficient clearness for all its practical uses): but to pretend that we can express it in incontrovertible terms, except those of Scripture, is surely an absurdity too great for any man, capable of logical deduction, to entertain; for it must involve both the nature of man and the nature of God. We cannot at all express our dark and limited conceptions of the one or of the other, but by metaphor, and comparison with the objects of our bodily senses. We collect something of the attributes of God from his works, and more from Revelation. We know also something of the qualities of man by means of our senses, and something, by the same means, of the operations of his mind; but of the *substance* either of the mind or of the body of man, or the principle of his generation, or of his animal life, we are absolutely ignorant. Can we then presume to lift our inquiry to the *substance of God?* Even our capacity

of receiving Revelation is limited by his limitation of our faculties. Man must cease to be what he is, before he can comprehend things so much above him. Why God has done any thing, why he made this world, why he created, why he restored us, he has not revealed to us; it does not concern us to know; it is impossible for us to discover; and can it be consistent with that perfect submission, faith, and resignation, which are due to him, from our frail, lowly, and dependent nature, to inquire?

From the infirmity of our nature we cannot speak of God at all, without using figurative expressions, drawn from natural objects. We limit in terms his immensity to particular form. We speak of his "smelling a sweet savour," of his "inclining his ear," of his "looking from heaven;" and having thus brought him down to our imaginations, in the likeness, and with the passions and senses of man, we are apt to attribute to him all our intellectual and material qualities and infirmities; and make him love and hate, and forget and remember, and be jealous and take vengeance. Who does not see and feel, that when we cannot speak of him at all, but in terms so far below even *our* gross conceptions of him, we ought to be very careful indeed how we presume to scan those matters which he has not made obvious to all capacities, lest we should be led away by the literal meaning of the terms to blaspheme him in our hearts.

Suffice it, then, that we know that we are created in a rational and fallible nature; that without the continual support of God we must fall; that by leaning upon our own powers and our own understanding, we all *have fallen;* that the consequences of the fall must be perpetual deterioration; that we cannot be restored but by the grace and power of God; that it has pleased God in his mercy and goodness, through his wisdom, by his power, to decree that he will pardon and restore the penitent and the faithful, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the operation of the Holy Spirit; and

to give us by the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension, sensible evidence of this his merciful dispensation, and an example of the obedience he requires; promising that he will give, by the intercession, and for the merit of his son Jesus Christ, his Holy Spirit to those who turn to him with all their hearts; and lead them finally to peace and salvation, of which, by any other means, they must have despaired. God has been pleased to reveal to us, fully, the plan of salvation; and this (with regard to such subjects) is not only all that it concerns us to know, but probably all that our nature is capable of comprehending[19].

Obj. VIII. It very often happens, that the Christian Religion does not produce good moral effects upon those who profess to believe it.

Be it so. This is matter of lamentation, but it certainly furnishes no *real* ground of objection against Christianity; nay, if any such objection be urged, it includes within itself a tacit concession in favour of the Christian system: since it acknowledges, that, if human conduct were universally consistent with this despised system, a correct and exalted morality would as universally prevail. The legislator of the universe, in promulgating the sublime laws of Christianity, though he furnished men with motives calculated to

[19] I was honoured with the preceding observations by a nobleman of great learning, taste, and judgment; for whose generous advice and assistance on numerous occasions, during the course of thirty years, I know not how to express adequately my sense of obligation. I do not expect that his lordship's theory will in every respect be adopted by every reader; but I shall pity the man who can peruse his remarks, and not admire that accurate estimate of the human powers, and that fine strain of devotional sentiment, which they throughout evince.

This constant and highly valued friend being now dead, I need no longer out of regard to his diffidence, which was commensurate with his talents and his erudition, conceal that the observations inserted above are due to the late *Earl of Carysfort*.

For another able reply to this objection, upon a widely different theory, I beg to refer to the late Mr. Fuller's excellent work, The Gospel its own Witness.

elevate them to his throne, and to extend their hopes far beyond the grave, did not at the same time transform the intelligent creatures to whom he gave those laws into mere machines. He has given them the power either to conform to Christian precepts, or to infringe them: and thus has placed in their own hands their own destiny. If, after this, a great many of them reject the good, and choose the evil, the fault is manifestly theirs, and not His, who by so many the most tremendous denunciations warns them against the latter, and by the most alluring invitations solicits them to the former. The objectors *must* allow, that no man is any farther a sincere Christian, than he is pure, and holy, and upright, and free from guile, and this, if they would only permit their reason to take the lead of their prejudices, would set the great question between them and us at rest for ever. For if, notwithstanding this the acknowledged tendency of the doctrine, we perceive that it has not always answered its end, the only just conclusion to be drawn from the circumstance is,—that the prejudices, the passions, and the constitution of man, frequently weaken or destroy the impressions which that doctrine naturally tends to produce on the soul. We ought not to be surprised, much less ought we to raise an objection on this basis: for it is easy to conceive, that a free and intelligent being cannot be *necessarily* impelled by motives and reasons; since they are not causes which have certain and necessary effects, like weights, levers, or springs: "they influence (says Dr. Waring), but not compel." Besides, it ought not to be forgotten, that all those who make an external profession of a doctrine are not always really and effectually convinced of its truth: in proportion to the real excellency of Christianity is the probability of hypocrisy; counterfeit Christians may abound as well as counterfeit coin, and that for a like reason.

Nor should it be forgotten, that the mode of argumentation on which this objection is founded is not *general*. No one thinks of objecting against philosophy,

that all those who profess it are not philosophers. Yet, like as the tendency of Christianity is to make Christians, so in its different kind and manner is it the tendency of philosophy to make philosophers. Let it then be allowed as a *fact*, that all who profess the doctrine of Christ are not saints; and, as an analogous fact, that all who profess to be philosophers are not such; yet let none be so weak, or so unwise, as to be laughed out of his religion, or of his philosophy, on this account.

Indeed, here, as in many other respects, religion has greatly the advantage of philosophy. No person rests the truth of any philosophical system upon the difficulty with which it is received, or upon the paucity of those who adopt it: while many of the declarations of Scripture show clearly[20], that the Christian religion was for a long period to be the religion of the minority; and that it is only in the *latter times* that great multitudes "of every nation, and kingdom, and tribe, and people," shall be converted unto God, and become sincere disciples of Christ. The actual state of the world, even where religion is known, therefore, rather proves the truth of Christianity, than militates against it.

I might add much more in reply to this objection, as well as to the kindred one that is founded upon the evils which have been done in the name of Christianity; but I prefer substituting a quotation from an author of great celebrity, who has never been accused of undue partiality towards the system these letters are intended to support.—"To pretend to say that religion is not a restraining motive because it does not always restrain, is equally absurd as to say that the civil laws are not

[20] Matt. vii. 14, 21; xx. 16; xxii. 14; xxvi. 11. Luke, xiii. 24. Is. xi. 6; xl. 1—11; lxv. 25, &c. Another objection, founded upon the circumstance that an interval of four thousand years was permitted to elapse between the epochs of the creation and the birth of Christ, was satisfactorily repelled by Arnobius, in the third century (Adv. Gentes). See also Cave's Primitive Christianity, part i. cap. 2, p. 28; and Baxter's valuable Reasons of the Christian Religion, part ii. cap. 10, p. 396.

a restraining motive. It is a false way of reasoning against religion, to collect, in a large work, a long detail of the *evils* it has produced, if we do not give at the same time an enumeration of the advantages which have flowed from it. Were I to relate all the evils that have arisen in the world from civil laws, from monarchy, and from republican government, I might tell of frightful things. Were it of no advantage for *subjects* to have religion, it would still be some if *princes* had it, and if they whitened with foam the only rein which can restrain those who fear not human laws. A prince, who *loves* and fears religion, is a lion who stoops to the hand that strokes, or to the voice which appeases him. He, who fears and *hates* religion, is like the savage beast that growls and bites the chain which prevents his flying on the passenger. He, who has no religion at all, is that terrible animal, who perceives his liberty only when he tears in pieces and devours[21]."

OBJ. IX. The Bible is a tasteless, insipid, inelegant, uninteresting book, composed almost always in a dull heavy style; and therefore cannot come from Him who is the Author of language and sentiment.

In replying to this we must relinquish reasoning, and oppose assertion to assertion. To overthrow the objection then, I cheerfully refer to the Bible itself, and ask where else can be found such wonderful and varied specimens of sublimity, as in the fifth chapter of Judges, the fourth, twenty-sixth, and thirty-seventh chapters of Job, the twenty-ninth, hundred and fourth, hundred and seventh, and hundred and thirty-ninth Psalms, several portions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, the first and second chapters of Joel, and the first chapter of the Apocalypse? Taking them even as they appear under the disadvantage of a translation, I will venture

[21] Montesquieu, Spirit of Laws, book xxiv. chap. 2. For a very masterly refutation of the numerous attempts to weaken the authority of Scripture, founded upon the real or imaginary anomalies in the conduct of *David*, see Dr. Delany's admirable Historical Account of the Life and Reign of David, King of Israel, in 2 vols. 8vo.

to affirm, that nothing can be found in Homer, Virgil, Shakspeare, or Milton, that will bear comparison with most of them in point of beauty, splendour, majesty, and grandeur. Where, again, will you find such interesting stories, so artlessly, yet often so pathetically told, as those of Jacob and Rachel, of Joseph and his brethren, of the death of Jacob, of the widow of Zarephath's and of the Shunamite's sons, of Naomi and Ruth? Where will you find more genuine touches of nature, more delightful pictures of the effects of friendship and sympathy, than those in the eleventh and fourteenth chapters of John's Gospel, and the twentieth chapter of the Acts?

Be assured that those, who lay aside the Bible under the notion of its being dull, dry, and unentertaining, deceive themselves most miserably, and thereby deprive themselves of the highest intellectual delight. This most excellent of all books, besides being of the highest authority in its historical portions, and of invaluable utility, as furnishing the only consistent and practicable scheme of morality, contains very much that is superlatively adapted to gratify the finest mental taste. It enters more sagaciously and more deeply into human nature; it develops character, delineates manners, charms the imagination, and warms the heart, more effectually than any book extant: and if once a person would take it into his hand, without the strange unreasonable idea of its flatness, and be only *not unwilling* to be pleased, I doubt not that he would find all his favourite authors dwindle in the comparison, and soon perceive that he was not merely reading the most religious, but the most *entertaining* book in the world[22].

The great objects, however, for which the Scriptures were put into our hands, are vastly more important than

[22] For numerous examples and quotations in proof of this position, I refer those who have any doubts, to Blackwall's Sacred Classics, and Melmoth's Sublime and Beautiful in Scripture: also to Burke on the Sublime, part ii. sec. 4, 5, 13.

the mere furnishing us with amusement. God, who is infinitely wise as well as infinitely good, knows our compound nature, and has regard to it, by bestowing upon us a Revelation which is fitted to man who has a *mind* to be instructed as well as entertained, a *heart* to be amended and renewed, and a *soul* to be saved.

By this time, I hope, you feel persuaded, upon the solid ground of the most rational conviction, that the Bible contains the pure and unadulterated *word of God;* such as comported with the majesty and mercy of the Supreme Being to bestow, and such as it will be highly salutary to man to receive with humility and gratitude. Study it, then, with daily attention, thankfulness, and reverence. Consider it as an unerring "light to your feet, and lamp to your path." Here we are strangers and pilgrims: the Bible points to heaven as our home. Here we are in an enemy's country: the Bible directs us to "fight the good fight of faith," under the guidance of the "Captain of our salvation." Here we are exposed to temptations, even to all the "fiery darts of Satan:" the Bible furnishes us with "the whole armour of God," and exhorts us to put on the "breastplate of righteousness, and the shield of faith; and to take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit." Here we are subject to want, distress, and disappointment: the Bible cheers us with the prospect of "a better and an enduring substance" in a happy region, where "God shall wipe away all tears from all faces." Here we may be poor, destitute, and despised; but if we are Christians indeed, the Bible assures us we are heirs of an invaluable and indestructible inheritance, "an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us."

Thus numerous and inestimable are the benefits offered to those who believe the Scriptures, and live conformably to the precepts therein exhibited. That these benefits and blessings may be yours, my dear friend, suffer me to entreat you sedulously to cherish the dispositions essential to a profitable perusal of the

sacred pages: those dispositions have been ably delineated by an excellent clergyman now living[23], in a passage with which I shall close this branch of our correspondence.

"In the first place, study them *devoutly*. Remember that they are the word of *God;* that they were written under the superintendence of his Spirit; and that their great purpose was to introduce and extend over the whole earth the Gospel and the kingdom of his Son. Remember, also, that they were written to conduct you to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Read them, therefore, with a reverence and holy fear, and make it your earnest and constant prayer to Him, from whom alone cometh every good and perfect gift, that his grace may open your understanding, enable you clearly to comprehend the import of the Sacred Writings, and deeply impress it upon your heart.

"Secondly, study the Scriptures with *Humility;* with a sincere desire to receive instruction from them, and to submit your own opinions to the declared will of your Maker and your Saviour. If we may judge, by the manner in which some persons speak concerning the Scriptures, of the temper and spirit with which they read them, we may almost conclude that they read them for the purpose of caviling, finding fault, and raising difficulties and objections. Be not thus blind and presumptuous. If you take up your Bible with Christian humility, you will not say concerning any doctrine, 'This is a strange and unreasonable doctrine, and I cannot receive it.' Your language will rather be, 'This doctrine is clearly contained in the word of God, and therefore must be true.' You will not say concerning any rule of practice, 'This is a hard and grievous commandment, and I may be excused from regarding it very strictly.' Your language will be, 'This commandment is positively enjoined by my Lord and Judge, and I must obey it, if I would prove my love to him, or escape condemnation at the last day.'

[23] Mr. Gisborne, in his Familiar Survey, &c. p. 231.

"Finally, read the Scriptures with a full purpose of heart, not merely to learn what they require of you, but faithfully to *practise* it, through God's blessed assistance, every day of your life. 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father.' 'Not the hearers of the law are just before God; but the doers of the law shall be justified[24].' If you read the Scriptures carelessly or merely from custom, or rather from a spirit of curiosity than from anxiety to profit by them, and to grow in grace; you do not read them as you ought to read the word of your Maker. You do not read them like a person solicitous above all things to obtain through Christ the kingdom of heaven; and conscious it will be bestowed by Christ on those only, who strive according to their power to learn from the Scriptures the way of his commandments, and faithfully to walk in it, by his help, unto death."

Believe me, dear Friend, unalterably yours.

END OF THE LETTERS ON THE *EVIDENCES* OF CHRISTIANITY.

LETTER XII.

Introductory Letter on the Leading Doctrines of the Christian Religion.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is much more easy for you to conjecture, than for me to describe, the pleasure I received from learning that you are now fully persuaded of the truth and Divine authority of the Christian Religion: and I cheerfully accede to your renewed request that this series of letters shall be extended until I have furnished you with a view of the principal doctrines proposed in Scripture for your belief, and of the grand duties which we are called upon as Christians to discharge. Had I not, however, a decided conviction of your supreme

[24] Matt. vii. 21. Rom. ii. 13.

love of truth, and of your steadfast determination to follow it whithersoever it may lead you, I should be somewhat apprehensive that, in performing this second part of the task your friendly deference to my opinions has assigned me, my efforts will be attended with less success than they have been in what I have already attempted. The truths which lie at the basis of the Christian system are so humiliating to human nature, so revolting to the sentiments of those who have too exalted ideas of the powers of reason, and who cherish erroneous conceptions of the dignity of man, that though they are so plainly stamped in the universal character and conduct of mankind, that "he who runs may read;" yet they require to be asserted *repeatedly* in the Word of God before they receive our assent: and after all we yield that assent more reluctantly than to any other truths ever presented to the mind.

Still, when a person admits, as you do, that the Holy Scriptures are a collection of books whose authors were divinely inspired, were led into all necessary truth, and preserved from all doctrinal error, by the superintendence of God himself, he at once sees the necessity of studying those sacred treasures under different feelings, and with different intentions, from those with which he turns to the perusal of any other work. He is aware that there are two points known to God, the inspirer of the Scriptures, which man cannot comprehend; that is to say, "*the secrets of the heart, and the succession of times.*" He therefore interprets the Bible with that entire submission of his own understanding to the Divine teaching, which such a persuasion is calculated to produce; and proceeds to the study of Theology with the maxim of Lord Bacon in his head at least, if not in his heart, that "by how much any divine mystery is more unpalatable and incredible, by so much the more honour is given to God in *believing*, and the *victory of our faith* is made more noble[1]."

Now to me it appears impossible, and I trust you will

[1] Advancement of Learning, book ix.

find it so, for any person attentively to read the Bible, and especially the New Testament, free from any previous bias, without coming to the conclusion that what distinguishes Christianity from all other religious systems is the circumstance of its being a *restorative dispensation.* The great dramatic poet, who, in one of his admirable descriptions of mercy, remarked that

> —— "All the souls that are were forfeit once;
> And he, that might the 'vantage best have took,
> Found out the remedy!"

correctly expressed, whether he intended it or not, the most humbling fact, and most consoling doctrine, the Bible proclaims to us. Had not "*all* sinned and come short of the glory of God," it would never have been declared that "Christ is the propitiation for the *sins of the whole world*[2]." Nor can we imagine that our Lord would himself have declared, "I came not to call the righteous but *sinners* to repentance[3];" or the Apostle Paul have affirmed, "It is worthy of *all* acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to SAVE *sinners*[4];" had not the universal prevalence of iniquity, in all ages, called for the Divine invention of that stupendous scheme of mercy, whereby God should at once "be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly[5]."

Christianity, it is true, is distinguishable from all other systems by the purity, excellence, and extent of the morality it enforces; yet this is not, I conceive, its most prominent characteristic. It no where presents us with a connected scheme of ethics, but it does far better in advancing the most simple precepts relative to every part of moral duty, and accompanying them with the most powerful incentives to upright and holy conduct. Its grand peculiarity consists in assuming the fact that man is in a fallen state, that he has lost the image of God, that he is of himself incapable of regaining the favour of his Creator, and in providing a remedy by

[2] 1 John, ii. 2. [3] Mark, ii. 17.
[4] 1 Tim. i. 15. [5] Rom. iii. 26; iv. 5.

which man may be cured of his moral disorder; this remedy being no less than the gift of "*the Son of God:*" who, in relation to mankind, is not so frequently called their pattern, as "the Physician of Souls," "the great Deliverer," "the *Saviour* of the world."

The more intimately you become acquainted with Christianity, as depicted in the New Testament, the more forcibly will you be struck with the wisdom of its constitution. It does not, if I may so say, insult and triumph over man by prescribing him a code of laws which he cannot obey, by referring him to statutes every one of which he has broken, and commanding him to preserve them entire; but it takes man *as he is*, provides for his restoration, points out the means of salvation, invites him to embrace those means, and then presents him with precepts, by the observance of which he may "adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour *in all things*[6]." In the Bible, moreover, the Christian doctrines always stand as indications of the character of God, and as the exciting motives of a corresponding character in man. Constituting thus the uniting link between the character of the Creator and the creature, they exhibit a majesty which it is impossible to despise, and a form of consistency and truth which it is difficult to disbelieve or reject. The scheme by which all this is effected is, doubtless, extraordinary; but it is not less worthy of acceptance on that account. Had it not been far beyond human capacity, and human discovery, it need not have been transmitted from heaven. God need not make supernatural communications to reveal to us what might have been found out by a natural process. Having ascertained that the Bible is the word of God, it is our duty to receive all it makes known to us (whether it coincide or not with *our* preconceived notions), without appeal to any other quarter. "I cannot comprehend the reason of this," may an inquirer after scriptural truth often say, "but it is God who declares it; I receive it on his authority, and

[6] Titus, ii. 10.

I humbly rely upon the promise, that what I know not now, I *shall* know hereafter[7]."

It is of extreme importance to have right views of the Christian system in general, because our eternal safety depends upon it. Probably there is no communion, nor any individual, whose religious notions are in *every* point correct; because human explications even of the true religion are likely more or less to be affected by human imperfection. Still, we may rest assured, because God has promised it, that the devout, humble, and sincere inquirer, shall, in every thing that is essential to salvation, be preserved from error. Now, among the various sects into which the Christian world is divided, all except *one* embrace the hypothesis that Christianity is a *provision of mercy* for an apostate and sinful world, through a *divine* Mediator. To determine whether the majority or the minority are wrong in this respect is of the utmost consequence: for they who adopt this hypothesis and they who reject it, "having different objects of worship, and different grounds of confidence, *must* be allowed to be of religions essentially different." What, then, say the Scriptures? for to them must be our ultimate appeal.

A man of plain understanding, who has no previously adopted system to favour, who reads for the sake of arriving at truth, and who therefore attaches to Scripture its most palpable and obvious meaning, being persuaded that it is incompatible with the character of a *revelation from God* to abound in enigmas, will soon find that the evangelical scheme is this:—God, foreseeing the fatal apostasy into which the whole human race would fall, did not determine to deal in a way of strict severity with us, so as to consign us over to universal ruin and inevitable damnation; but, on the contrary, determined to enter into a treaty of peace and reconciliation, and to publish to all whom the Gospel should reach, the express offers of life and glory, in a certain method which his infinite wisdom judged suitable to the purity of his nature, and the

[7] John, xiii, 7.

honour of his government. This method is so astonishing and peculiar, that for man to have proposed it, independent of Divine teaching, would have approached to blasphemy, and to have believed it on any other than Divine authority, next to impossible. "God so loved the world as to give his *only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but enjoy everlasting life." He sent into the world "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person [8]," partaker of his own divine perfections and honours, to be not merely a teacher of righteousness, and a messenger of grace, but also a *sacrifice* for the sins of men. Accordingly, at such a time as Infinite Wisdom saw most fitted for the purpose, the Lord Jesus Christ, "when he took upon him to deliver man, did not abhor the virgin's womb," but was *born* "of a virgin [9]," and appeared in human flesh: after he had fulfilled the whole law, gone through incessant fatigues, and borne all the injuries which the ingratitude and malice of men could inflict, he voluntarily "submitted himself to death, even the death of the cross," and having been "*delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification* [10]." "When he had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers:" forty days after his resurrection he, in sight of his disciples, "ascended into heaven," where he has become our Intercessor; and, agreeably to his promise, sent down his Spirit upon his apostles to enable them, in the most persuasive and authoritative manner, "to preach the Gospel;" giving it in charge to them and their successors to publish it "to every creature;" and declaring that all who repent and believe in that Gospel may be saved, may be released from punishment, and restored to the image and favour of God, by virtue of its abiding energy, and the immutable power and grace of its Divine Author [11].

It is possible that a belief of these truths, striking

[8] John, iii. 16. Heb. i 3.
[9] Is. vii. 14. Matt. i. 23. Luke, i. 31. [10] Rom. iv. 25.
[11] See Doddridge's Works, vol. i. p. 274.

and momentous as they are, may float loosely in the understanding, without being efficacious. But they are exquisitely formed to affect us deeply: and whenever the secret links which connect the understanding with the heart are acted upon by the mysterious energy of Him "who knoweth our frame," and all its hidden springs, this belief leads to that saving change which is called conversion. Then he who is the subject of it becomes "a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new[12]." He has new apprehensions of things, new hopes, new fears, new joys, new sorrows, new affections, new employments, new prospects, and, it may be, new friends and new foes: he feels a perfect renovation of character; his greatest solicitude is to be a "fellow worker with God, and a fellow heir with the saints:" and impelled by the joint influence of delight and self-abasement, he may be ready to exclaim, with Baxter, "O wonderful! that heaven will be familiar with earth, God with man, the Most High with a worm, and the Most Holy with a vile sinner! Man refuses me when God entertains me. Those I never wronged reproach me; and God, whom I have unspeakably injured, invites and entreats me, and condescends to me, as if he were obliged to serve me. Men may abhor me, whom I have deserved well of: but God, from whom I deserve eternal torments, graciously accepts me. I upbraid myself with my sins, but he now upbraids me not: I condemn myself for them, but he will not condemn me. He forgives me sooner than I can forgive myself. I have peace with him, before I can have peace in my own conscience."

The Christian religion, as portrayed in the Gospel, differs from all others in furnishing an *internal* principle, from which the purest conduct emanates. It is not a religion of forms and ceremonies, but the religion of the "inner man." The language of God to every Christian is, "*My son, give me thine heart.*" The true Christian, as depicted in the New Testament, is a

[12] 2 Cor. v. 17.

faithful and active servant, who inquires what his Lord's will is, and performs it with cheerful alacrity. He makes it " his meat and his drink to *do* the will of his heavenly Father;" and he knows that, conformably with that will, he must relieve " the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world[13]." He considers it his duty, and finds it his delight, to please God, and render as far as possible his fellow creatures happy; " to add to his faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity[14]." Still he walks as on the confines of the eternal state, and is anxious, therefore, to renounce the world, its course and its spirit, yea, to be "dead unto the world" and " alive unto God," to attain more and more of the Divine image, to " grow up to Christ in all things," to enjoy " fellowship with God," and, " if he be risen with Christ, to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God[15]."

Such are the dispositions and the employments which are required to be exemplified in the sincere Christian. He is exhorted to flee from a contrary temper and conduct, by the assurance that " the wrath of God *abideth* on" all those who reject the offer of the Gospel; and he is stimulated to persevere in the Christian course by the assurance that heaven is the inheritance of every sincere and humble follower of Jesus. His hopes are constantly directed to that happy period when he shall be " ever with the Lord, to behold" and participate in " his glory." He lives under the persuasion that, after he has passed through " the valley of the shadow of death," " God will wipe away all tears from his eyes," and he will be no more exposed to fear or sorrow, to mourning or death. He believes that his spirit will be united to his glorified

[13] James, i. 27. [14] 2 Pet. i. 5—7.

[15] Gal. vi. 14. Rom. vi. 11. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Eph. iv. 15. 1 John, i. 3. Col. iii. 1.

body in those delightful regions, where an enemy shall never enter, and from whence a friend shall never depart; where there will be satiety without disgust, day and no night, joy and no weeping, difference in degree and yet all full, " love without dissimulation," excellence without envy, multitudes without confusion, harmony without discord; where the understanding shall be astonishingly enriched, the will perfectly rectified, the affections all transformed into love and joy; where " the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed him, and lead him unto living fountains of waters[16]:" where God shall be the light and the glory of the place for ever and ever!

These, in brief, are the doctrines of the New Testament, the " fruits of the Spirit," manifested in those who believe, and the glorious expectations of a future world, which are intended at once to stimulate and to reward " a patient continuance in well doing." " But these," you will probably say, " are not recognised by many who call themselves Christians; for there are many that profess a belief in Christianity, who nevertheless ridicule the idea of living under its power. If that system of religion, which is inculcated in the New Testament, teach, as your language clearly implies, the depravity of human nature, the necessity of regeneration, the influences of the Spirit, particular Providence, the atonement and the Divinity of Jesus Christ, justification by faith, the resurrection of the body, and the eternity of future punishment; it teaches what not many rich, not many noble, not many wise, are prepared to receive, and what none *can* receive without being exposed in consequence to contumely, derision, and reproach." While I acknowledge the justice of this observation, I would wish to guard you against drawing any such conclusions from it as would be unfavourable to a cordial reception of the great and essential peculiarities of the evangelical system. That several of the rich and noble should reject the religion of Jesus Christ is not at all to be wondered at, when it

16 Rev. vii. 17.

is recollected that the genuine fruits of that religion are meekness, humility, godly simplicity, an aversion to pomp and display;—dispositions, which flow in a current directly opposite to all the natural tendencies of opulence, and which, notwithstanding (such is the irresistible energy of Christian principles), have often been found to adorn the character of persons of the most exalted rank,

"Who wear a coronet and pray."

There are also monarchs who delight in acknowledging their allegiance to the King of kings, and whose piety is to them a greater ornament than the richest gem which decks their crowns. So that God is not without witnesses, nor Jesus Christ without sincere disciples, among those who surround, or those who sit upon, earthly thrones.

As to the frequent rejection of the peculiarities of the Christian religion by men of learning and science, neither can that be a matter of surprise. It is very possible to know much without being *wise*, and especially without being "wise unto salvation."

"— Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
Have ofttimes no connexion. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
Wisdom, in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
Till smoothed, and squared, and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems t' enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more." COWPER.

That great literary and philosophical endowments may be possessed by persons, who, notwithstanding, have the most low and groveling conceptions of almost every thing connected with religion, is evident from the sketch of the notions of heathen poets, legislators, and philosophers, which I laid before you in an early part of these letters. From that sketch you would perceive, that while no subject in art or science was too lofty or too difficult for the acquisition of those men, no object

in nature was too mean, no conception of the basest mind too obscene, to serve as objects of worship; there you saw that the men whose genius has been the admiration of all successive ages, whose performances as poets, orators, historians, logicians, or mathematicians, are, after the lapse of two thousand years, held up as models of excellence in their respective kinds,—were yet sunk in such deplorable ignorance respecting religion, as to be not a whit superior to the most barbarous and uncultivated inhabitants of South America or New Zealand. But the reason is evident. The reception of religious truth depends on the state of the heart, not on that of the intellect; and hence it has happened that though some men of enlarged intellect have had hearts in which the seeds of grace could not germinate, there have been others, such as NEWTON and EULER, who, while they have extorted from nature some of her profoundest secrets, and have illuminated the world by their discoveries, have thought it their greatest honour to "sit at the feet of Jesus," to imbibe the pure spirit of the Gospel, and to be not merely philosophical, but practical and devotional, believers of Christianity, including its peculiarities and mysteries.

You will often, I doubt not, hear it asserted, notwithstanding the authority of the great names which I have already mentioned, that Christianity is a scheme fitted only to the measure of vulgar and uncultivated minds. Yet be assured that they who say so have deluded themselves, if they are in earnest, in thus dealing with you. Rather, consider it a vulgar and groveling intellect, which suffers itself to be enchained and riveted to the sensible objects immediately at hand. Why, indeed, should men be thus enchained when nature herself, rightly contemplated, invites them to expatiate? Look *downwards*, and your eyes have something immediate to fix upon; but can they penetrate beyond the surface? Why is all shut up in darkness beyond the mere shell and exterior, except to teach you that you should have your desires shut out from those earthly things which are under your feet, and hidden from your

sight? If all the beauty and all the fruit of the earth are placed on its surface, should it not at least teach you, that though they may delight and interest you, you must guard against giving them (in comparison of eternal things) more than the surface of your affections? And why is it that, when you raise your head and direct your eyes *upwards*, they can expatiate without limit, but to teach you that the heavens are bright and transparent by day, and glitter with splendour by night, because the Great Spirit is beyond, who lets forth a little of his glory and majesty through those chinks and crannies of his pavilion, to remind you how vast should be your affections towards Him, how incessant your desires and aspirations towards his kingdom?

You well know that, with respect to navigation and geography, we correct and fix our knowledge of the earth, by means of the heavenly bodies. Sun, moon, and stars, all lend their aid in determining the magnitude of the planet which we inhabit, and the relative positions and dimensions of the towns, cities, kingdoms, and empires upon its surface. If, then, the philosopher, the geographer, and the mariner are thus compelled to consult heaven that they may know the earth, why should it be thought an indication of a vulgar and ignoble man to look to heaven to learn his nature, his duty, and his expectations?

But this, you will probably be told, is to declaim on a bare analogy. Consider, then, since man is a moral and responsible, as well as a sinful creature, whose future and everlasting condition will be influenced by the habitual tenor of his life and conduct; whether *any* pursuit can display a wisdom more becoming a cultivated mind than the acquisition of the means by which it may regain the forfeited favour of Heaven, and the knowledge which connects time with eternal duration, and inspires a hope full of immortality? All else, unless it be duly restricted to its appropriate use, and each subordinate to the nobler purposes of our entire nature,—

"—————— is fume,
Or emptiness, or fond impertinence;

And renders us, *in things that most concern,*
Unpractised, unprepared, and still to seek." MILTON.

Then, as to intellectual pursuits, instead of conceding to the opposers of evangelical religion, that the topics which Christianity supplies, are adapted merely to vulgar and uncultivated minds, ought it not to be conceded to us that they furnish meditation for the most soaring and inquisitive genius; since they relate to matters of infinite moment, infinite dignity, infinite diversity, manifesting the richness of infinite love. What a field for the noblest excursions! Eternal duration:—souls immortal, ranked in an order of existences from which none have the power to escape, and involving the awful alternatives of perennial bliss or endless woe:—other created beings, altogether spiritual, ever active, ever watchful; pure intelligences, from whom the secrets of "the Ancient of Days," and the closets of men's hearts alone are hidden; always enjoying the beatific vision of their Maker, always delighting to do his will, always "ministering to the heirs of salvation:"—other created beings, too, the powers of darkness, "*the spiritual wickednesses in high places,*" whose number, energy, and combination, constitute a dreadful world of evil spirits, conflicting where they prevail not, and often harassing those whom they are not permitted to overcome:—the Son of God, who was also Son of Man, he "who cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah," —yielding himself to humiliation, derision, suffering, and death;—then bursting the bonds of the tomb, triumphing not only over death, but over "him that had the power of death, even the Devil;" assuming his seat, as the KATHEMENOS, "*the Sitting One,*" at the right hand of his Heavenly Father, and seeing the promise verified, that "God will make his foes his footstool:"—the kingdoms of the world becoming the kingdoms of God, and of his Christ;—holiness, happiness, and harmony, incessantly extending themselves, and vivifying the assurance that not one jot or one tittle of what the Scriptures announce shall fail. Topics such as these,

far from being ignoble, far from tending to contract the mind, give it an expansion of occupation, and a glow of delight, which no discoverer but he who has found "the Pearl of great price" can ever attain! "Ye are come," says St. Paul, and invites us to unite with him in the sublime and ecstatic contemplation, "ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See, then, that you refuse not him that speaketh;" and suffer not men who, whatever may be their knowledge in other respects, are ignorant of religion, to tempt you to reject it.

I address you thus earnestly, my friend, because I know that they who misconceive the characteristics of our faith, in consequence underrate its mental tendencies; not seeing that while it is more certain, more attainable, and more useful, than any other knowledge, it is also more refined and elevated; and because I am anxious to impress it upon your mind, that Christianity, apart from its distinguishing doctrines (if it be possible to conceive of so strange a disruption of body and soul, in that which will endure for ever), will have no firm hold upon the heart; nor, in those great conjunctures where its aid is most necessary, can it reasonably be expected to have any abiding influence upon the conduct. I wish you, farther, to believe (and trust I shall, ere I close these letters, succeed in causing you to believe) that there is no intermediate ground in argument, which a fair, candid, and unsophistical reasoner can render tenable, between pure Deism, and moderate orthodoxy; that is, between the system exploded in my first letter, and that which in the remainder of the series I purpose to defend. Let me also be permitted to remark, that it is no *new* scheme of religion which I

am recommending for your adoption. I have not argued, nor will I argue, exclusively in favour of Calvinism, or Arminianism, or Methodism, or any set of opinions of human fabrication; but shall endeavour to attain that middle point where all that is good in either seems to meet, and all that is exceptionable to be excluded[17]; and therefore shall defend those sentiments

[17] Since the publication of the first edition of these Letters, I have met with two passages in the writings of Dr. Watts, which, as they very clearly express sentiments on the disputed topics, analogous to those which I have long entertained, I shall beg leave to transcribe into this note.

"Let it be observed that when the Remonstrants assert that Christ died for all mankind, merely to purchase conditional salvation for them, and when those who profess to be the strictest Calvinists assert that Christ died only and merely to procure effectual pardon and salvation for the elect; it is not because the *whole* Scripture every where expressly or plainly reveals or asserts the particular sentiments of either of these sects, with an exclusion of the other: but the reason of these different assertions of men is this, that the holy writers in different texts, *pursuing different subjects, and speaking to different persons*, sometimes SEEM to favour each of these two opinions; and men being at a loss to reconcile them by any medium, run into different extremes, and entirely follow one of these tracks of thought, and neglect the other. But surely, if there can be a way found to reconcile these two doctrines of the absolute salvation of the elect, by the obedience, righteousness, and death of Christ procuring it for them, with all things necessary to the possession of it; and also of the conditional salvation provided for all mankind, and offered to them in the Gospel, through the all-sufficient and overflowing value of the obedience and sufferings of Christ; this will be the most fair, natural, and easy way of reconciling these different texts of Scripture, without any strain or torture put upon any of them." Watts's Ruin and Recovery of Mankind, Quest. 13. See also, Baxter on Doctrinal Controversies, pp. 17, 18; and the Rev. Robert Hall's preface to the third edition of his father's "Help to Zion's Travellers."

The second passage relates to the Divinity of Christ. "In my younger years (says he), when I endeavoured to form my judgment on that article, the Socinians were the chief or only popular opponents. Upon an honest search of the Scripture, and a comparison of their notions with it, I wondered how it was possible for any person to believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and yet to believe that *Jesus Christ was a mere man.* So perverse and preposterous did their sense of the Scripture appear, that *I was amazed how men, who*

and doctrines which are so *clearly* contained in the Bible, that none deny them who are not in consequence compelled to give up the authority of some part of Sacred Writ,—which were held and taught by the ablest and best men in the first three centuries,—which warmed the breasts of saints and martyrs,—which have inspired the hopes and regulated the conduct of a great majority of pious men in all ages of the universal church,—which, through the providence of God, have been inserted in the formularies of *most* established churches,—and which, if language have a plain and obvious interpretation, are defined in the Articles, incorporated in the Ritual, and enforced in the Homilies, of the Church of England.

The adoption of these opinions, and especially the manifestation of them in a holy, pure, and exemplary life, will probably subject you to the ridicule of the most thoughtless of your former associates. But for this you will be amply compensated by enjoying peace of conscience, and "reconciliation with God." And that you may be in some measure fortified by the observation of others against the derision to which you will be exposed, allow me to extract for your use three or four quotations from authors of the present times, whom no person of taste and judgment (to say nothing of piety) will affect to despise.

You may, perhaps, be called an enthusiast, or at least told that these notions lead to enthusiasm; but you may repel the charge by the following quotation: "The preacher (or the religious writer) who neglects the *peculiarities* of the Gospel, neglects the most profound and the most copious, the most important and the most interesting, the most impressive and the most moral, part of his profession; and, above all, he affords an advantage to the delusions of *enthusiasts*, of which an opposite system would effectually deprive them.

pretended to reason above their neighbours, could wrench and strain *their understandings, and subdue their assent to such interpretations*. And I am of the same mind still." Pref. to Chris. Doct. of Trinity.

Enthusiasm, in the sense here used, is not a natural product of the Gospel, but an accidental perversion of its tendencies; the origin of which is to be traced, in every age, to *the neglect of the Gospel as a peculiar system*, and to the confounding its authoritative sanctions with the more indefinite obligations of natural morality. Look at the early ages of Christianity, when its peculiarities were first communicated, and largely insisted on, as the *essential parts* of the system, in every sermon. The effect was powerful, and it was *moral*, beyond all example,—producing the utmost efforts of heroic and disinterested virtue, with very few, and comparatively feeble, examples of that wretched enthusiasm, or interested hypocrisy, which combines the profession of the most important truths with the practice of the most contemptible and sordid vices[18]."

Seeing that the vocabulary of reproach is indefinite, others may apply to you a different term, and brand you as a *methodist*. If so, try whether you cannot laugh at the unmeaning absurdity of the appellation. "The vain and malignant spirit (says a most acute and profound Essayist), which had decried the elevated piety of the Puritans, sought about, as Milton describes the wicked one in Paradise, for some vehicle in which it might again, with facility, come forth to hiss at zealous Christianity, and in another lucky moment fell on the term *methodist*. If there is no *sense* in the word as now applied, there seems, however, to be a great deal of aptitude and execution. It has the advantage of being comprehensive as a general denomination, and yet humiliating as a special badge, for every thing that ignorance and folly may mistake for fanaticism, or that malice may wilfully assign to it. Whenever a grave formalist feels it his duty to sneer at those operations of religion on the passions which he never felt, he has only to call them methodistical; and notwithstanding that the word is both so trite and so vague, he feels as if he had uttered a good pungent thing. There is

[18] Edinburgh Review, vol. xvii. p. 470.

satiric smartness in the *word*, though there be none in the *man*. In default of keen faculty in the mind, it is delightful thus to find something that will do as well, ready bottled up in odd terms. It is equally convenient to a profligate, or a coxcomb, whose propriety of character is to be supported by laughing indiscriminately at all the symptoms of religion; the one to evince that his courage is not sapped by conscience, the other to make the best advantage of his instinct of catching at impiety as a substitute for sense. Each feels that he has manfully *set them down*, when he has called them methodism. Such terms have a pleasant facility of throwing away the matter in question to scorn, without any trouble of making a definite, intelligible charge of extravagance or delusion, and attempting to prove it[19]."

Others, to give vent to their contempt, may characterize you as *evangelical*. And "such is the new meaning now assigned to old terms, that we doubt if the application of the epithet in question would not excite a sneer, if not a suspicion, in some minds against the character of Isaiah himself, were we to name him by his ancient denomination, *The Evangelical Prophet*. This laconic term includes a diatribe in a word. ' It is established into a sweeping term of derision of all serious Christians, and its compass is stretched to such an extent as to involve within it every shade and shape of real or fictitious piety from the elevated, but sound and sober Christian, to the wildest and most absurd fanatic; its large enclosure takes in all, from the most honourable heights of erudition to the most contemptible depths of ignorance. Every man who is serious, and every man who is silly; every man who is holy, and every man who is mad, is included in this comprehensive epithet. We see perpetually that solidity, sublimity, and depth are not found a protection against the magic mischief of this portentous appellation[20]."

[19] Foster's Essays, vol. ii. Lett. 1.

[20] Mrs. More's Christian Morals, vol. ii. p. 81.

The men, who are so fond of employing terms of reproach to designate those who think that religion is something more than a mere matter of speculation, seem to have forgotten that the first and most indispensable requisite in religion is *seriousness;* and that levity in religion upon religious topics, or sneering at men who are *in earnest* whenever such topics are introduced, has a very prejudicial effect upon those who indulge in such practices. Of such you may call the attention to the sentiments of a late venerable moralist and divine, as exhibited in the passage below.

"The turn which this levity usually takes is in jests and raillery upon the opinions, or the peculiarities, or the persons, of men of particular sects, or who bear particular names: especially if they happen to be more serious than ourselves. And of late this loose, and I can hardly help calling it *profane,* humour has been directed chiefly against the followers of methodism. But against whomsoever it happens to be pointed, it has all the bad effects, both upon the speaker and the hearer, which we have noticed; and as in other instances, so in this, give me leave to say that it is very much misplaced. In the first place, were the doctrines and sentiments of those who bear this name ever so foolish and extravagant (I do not say that they are either), this proposition I shall always maintain to be true, viz. that *the wildest opinion that ever was entertained, in matters of religion, is more rational than unconcern about these matters.* Upon this subject nothing is so absurd as indifference; no folly so contemptible as thoughtlessness and levity. In the next place, do methodists deserve this treatment? Be their particular doctrines what they may, the professors of these doctrines appear to be in earnest about them: and a man who is in earnest about religion *cannot be a bad man,* still less a fit subject for derision. I am no methodist myself. In their leading doctrines I differ from them. But I contend that sincere men are not for these, or indeed any, doctrines, to be made laughing-stocks to others. I do

not bring in the case of the methodists for the purpose of vindicating their tenets, but for the purpose of observing (and I wish that observation may weigh with all my readers) that the custom of treating their characters and persons, their preaching or their preachers, their meetings or worship, with scorn, has the pernicious consequence of destroying our own seriousness, together with the seriousness of those who hear, or join in, such conversation; especially if they be young persons; and I am persuaded that much mischief is actually done in this very way[21]."

Leaving these admirable sentiments to make their full impression on your mind, or to steel you against the puny attacks of those who imagine burlesque and buffoonery are the proper instruments to correct what *they* deem fanatical eccentricities, while others may class them among religious excellences:

I remain, dear Sir, your sincere Friend.

May 30, 1811.

LETTER XIII.

On the Fall of Man, and the Depravity of Human Nature.

PLATO, as you will doubtless recollect, defined man, in his time, a biped without feathers: and DIOGENES, in order to show what he deemed the absurdity of this definition, plucked all the feathers from a cock, and, placing it in the midst of the academy, exclaimed, "There is one of Plato's men!" Diogenes, it seems, was not aware that Plato's definition was suggested by a tradition which had reached him, that man was once in a far superior state with regard to morals, but had been degraded by vice, and was now so lowered as to become, with respect to his former condition, what a bird would be when stripped of his feathers, so as to

[21] Dr. Paley's Posthumous Sermons, Ser. I: On "Seriousness in Religion indispensable above all other Dispositions."

be no longer able to fly. In conformity with this, the Platonists in general believed a pre-existent state, in which all souls had sinned, and thus lost their wings, whereby they were once capable of ascending; and so they sunk into these bodies partly as a punishment for former follies. This was called in their form of speech, πτερορρύησις, or *a moulting of their wings:* their daily experience in themselves, and their wise observance of others, convincing them that all mankind come into the world with a propensity to vice rather than to virtue; and that man is not such a creature now as he came from his Maker's hand, but is some way or other *plucked of his feathers,* or degenerated from his primitive rectitude and glory.

So again, MARCUS ANTONIUS confessed that men *were born mere slaves* to their appetites and passions; and very many of the Heathen philosophers, guided only by the light of nature, affirmed that men are of themselves destitute of true knowledge, purity, and reason, while in the Hebrew Scriptures, the word used for man as the son of Adam, is *Enosh,* indicating that he is "*sorry, wretched, and incurably sick.*" Several modern philosophers, however, and some modern *Divines,* represent this doctrine as absurd and contemptible in the highest degree: on which account it will be proper to employ a little time in ascertaining its correctness, and evincing its conformity, as well with what may be observed in the world, as with the declarations of Scripture.

According to every conception we can form of the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, as well as according to the most express and unequivocal language of the Bible, "God formed man *upright:*" he was furnished with a clear and sagacious mind, with reason bright and strong, and possessed transcendent qualifications for the most elevated happiness. But, that he might be *accountable,* he was necessarily created *free;* and, that he might never forget that he was under the cognizance and dominion of a moral governor, a test of obedience was set before him.

"God made thee perfect, not immutable;
And good he made thee; but to persevere
He left it in thy power; ordained thy will
By nature free, not overruled by fate
Inextricable, or strict necessity:
Our voluntary service he requires,
Not our necessitated; such with him
Finds no acceptance, nor can find; for how
Can hearts, not free, be tried whether they serve
Willing or no, who will but what they must
By destiny, and can no other choose?"—MILTON.

In this respect, God did not deal worse with man than with his other creatures; but man acted worse towards his Maker than any of them. He did not conform to the laws of his nature, but broke his allegiance to God by choosing evil instead of good. Thus he sunk from his original happy state, and, according to the constitution of things,

"Brought death into the world, and all our woe;"

his whole nature and race becoming tainted, so that he was viler than the brutes that perish, forfeited his native blessings, and, with his progeny, became rebels, and obnoxious to their Maker's displeasure. Thus, it was the sin of man that filled the creature with vanity; and it is the vanity of the creature that fills the soul of man with vexation; such is the circle of unrenewed nature. Without having regard to this original degeneracy, it is hard, nay, I believe impossible, to account satisfactorily for the poor, dark, stupid, and wretched circumstances, in which so great a part of mankind are brought into this world, in which they grow up age after age in gross ignorance and vice, thoughtless of their duty to the God that created them, and negligent of the true happiness which flows from the enjoyment of his favour. For, on looking upon man before he is turned unto God by the spirit of holiness, what do you find? The *mind*, full of vanity, ignorance, darkness, contradiction: the *conscience*, full of insensibility or of false excuses: the *heart*, full of deceit, impenitence, and hardness; no sins, no judgments, no mercies, no allurements, no hopes, no fears, able to awaken and

shape it aright, without Divine energy: the *will*, full of disability, of aversion, of enmity, and opposition: the *memory*, unfaithful in retaining the good, tenacious in recollecting the evil: and thence is the *whole man* full of perturbation and disorder.

The history of the Fall of Man is succinctly related, as you will doubtless remember, in the third chapter of the book of Genesis. Its effects are indelibly marked upon every individual, inasmuch as "in Adam all die;" and even upon the earth itself, which, still groaning under the original malediction, brings forth "thorns, and thistles, and briers," and thus will continue to do till "the restitution of all things." These are not, as has been often insinuated, the notions of men of distempered minds, made imbecile by infirmity, or soured by disappointment: but of the wisest and best men in all ages. Consult the writings of the Christian Fathers, and you will find JUSTIN MARTYR, in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, saying, "The whole race of men descending from Adam, have become liable to death and to the deception of the serpent, each of them, by reason of the same thing, having fallen under the influence of sin." CLEMENS ROMANUS, and others, most fully express the same sentiment. Attend also to the language of the Reformers, and especially to the founders of the English church. "Forasmuch (say they) as the true knowledge of ourselves is very necessary to come to the right knowledge of God, ye have heard how humbly all good men ought always to think of themselves."——"The Holy Ghost, in writing the holy Scriptures, is in nothing more diligent than pulling down man's vain-glory and pride, which of all vices is most universally grafted in all mankind, even from the *first infection* of our first father Adam."——"Of ourselves we be crab-trees that can bring forth no apples. We be of ourselves of such earth, as can but bring forth weeds, nettles, brambles, briers, cockle, and darnel. Our fruits be declared in the fifth chapter of Galatians. We have neither faith, charity, hope, patience,

chastity, nor any thing else that good is, but of God; and therefore these virtues be called there *the fruits of the Holy Ghost*, and not the fruits of man."——"We are, of ourselves, very sinful, wretched, and damnable. Of ourselves, and by ourselves, we are not able either to think a good thought, or work a good deed, so that we can find in ourselves no hope of salvation, but rather whatsoever maketh unto our destruction. *O Israel, thy destruction cometh of* THYSELF, *but in* ME *only is thy help and comfort*[1]."

"Our very virtues (says Richard Hooker) may be snares unto us. The enemy that waiteth for all occasions to work our ruin, hath found it harder to overthrow an humble sinner than a proud saint. There is no man's case so dangerous as his whom Satan hath persuaded that his own righteousness shall present him blameless in the sight of God. If we could say, we were not guilty of any thing at all in our consciences (we know ourselves far from this innocency; we cannot say, we know nothing by ourselves; but if we could) should we therefore plead not guilty before the presence of our Judge, who sees farther into our hearts than we ourselves can do? If our hands did never offer violence to our brethren, *a bloody thought doth prove us murderers before him:* if we had never opened our mouth to utter any scandalous, offensive, or hurtful word, *the cry of our secret cogitations is heard in the ears of God.* If we did not commit the sins, which daily and hourly, either in deed, word, or thoughts, we do commit; yet in the *good* things which we do, how many defects are intermingled! God, in that which is done, respecteth the mind and intention of the doer. Cut off, then, all those things wherein we have regarded our own glory, those things which men do to please men, and to satisfy our own liking, those things which we do for any by-respect, not sincerely and purely for the love of God; and a small score will serve for the number of our righteous deeds.

[1] Homily on the Misery of all Mankind: see also Article the 9th.

Let the holiest and best things which we do, be considered: we are never better affected unto God than when we pray; yet when we pray, how are our affections many times distracted! How little reverence do we show unto the grand majesty of God, unto whom we speak! How little remorse of our own miseries! How little taste of the sweet influence of his tender mercies do we feel! Are we not as unwilling many times to begin, and as glad to make an end, as if in saying, *call upon me,* he had set us a very burthensome task? It may seem somewhat extreme, which I will speak; therefore let every one judge of it, even as his own heart shall tell him, and no otherwise: I will but only make a demand:—If God should yield unto us, not as untô Abraham:—If fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, yea, or if ten good persons could be found in a city, for their sakes that city should not be destroyed: but, and if he should make us an offer thus large; search all the generations of men, since the fall of our father Adam, find *one* man that hath done *one* action, which hath passed from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all, for that *one man's only action* neither man nor angel shall feel the torments which are prepared for both. Do you think that this ransom, to deliver men and angels, could be found to be among the sons of men? The best things which we do have somewhat in them to be pardoned. How then can we do any thing meritorious, or worthy to be rewarded? Indeed, God doth liberally promise whatsoever appertaineth to a blessed life, to as many as *sincerely* keep his law, though they be not *exactly* able to keep it. Wherefore, we acknowledge a dutiful necessity of doing well; but *the meritorious dignity of doing well we utterly renounce.* We see how far from the perfect righteousness of the law; the little fruit which we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound: we put no confidence at all in it, we challenge nothing in the world for it, we dare not *call God to reckoning,* as if we had him in our debt books: *our continual suit to him is, and*

must be, to bear with our infirmities, and pardon our offences[2]."

But many will say, in opposition to all this, "We admit the fact of the great, though not universal, wickedness that prevails in the world: but we cannot assent to what you give as the *Natural History* of it. We do not think it inseparable from man's *present* nature, but an accidental acquisition; we do not ascribe it to the influence of an hereditary taint, but conceive it to be the effect of imitation and custom, of acquired habit, of corrupt example, of injudicious tuition." This, by the way, is only saying in other words, that depravity is the effect of depravity. Let us, however, examine the matter a little more closely. That vile passions may in some be the result of improper tuition or of imitation, I have no inclination to deny; but they cannot always be referred to such an origin. How often do we see children in the veriest infancy exhibit strong and unquestionable indications of boisterous tempers, of obstinacy, or impatience? How often do children of the most pious parents, who are so brought up as during the first six or seven years of their lives, never to witness any species of crime, any instances of ingratitude, of falsehood, or deception, or any indulgence in irascible passions, furnish painful truths that they can be deceivers, wilful liars, ungrateful, passionate, malignant, and unforgiving? These instances, I will venture to say, occur very frequently when it is impossible to ascribe them to imitation. But suppose the contrary were admitted, the opposers of the Scriptural doctrine would gain nothing by the concession. For of whom could a child acquire iniquity by imitation, but of some one who was born before him? And whom did that person imitate, but some one born before *him?* And where must this series terminate? If you say any where short of the first man, you have to account for the remarkable phenomenon of sin's making its first inroad at the identical time, and fixing upon the

[2] Hooker's Discourse on Justification, § 7.

identical person you have selected; and this will be found infinitely more difficult than extending the series to the great progenitors of the human race. Besides, does not the very circumstance of an aptitude to imitate evil, and rather to imitate evil than good, indicate something like that hereditary taint, which it is brought forward to contravene and supersede? Can an inherent tendency to imitate evil, an undeviating propensity to slide into vice (unless the strong hand of moral discipline, or the suasive influence of Divine grace, prevents), be fairly or rationally ascribed to any thing less than such a cause as that with which the Bible makes us acquainted? Pursuing this train, you will see that the Scriptural solution of the difficulty before us is *reasonable;* and that it has the farther advantage of showing, that moral evil was not, as some have been presumptuous enough to assert, produced by the Creator, but contracted by the creature, who, though he was endowed with "power to stand, was free to fall[3]."

Sceptical writers, who are solicitous either to destroy or diminish the authority of the sacred records, have usually selected three points at which to attack the

[3] Let it be recollected, however, that though our defection is a necessary consequence of the fall of our first parents, it by no means follows that if they had continued upright *we* should. The notion of a covenant "that Adam should *stand* as well as fall for himself and his posterity," appears to me totally unsupported by Scripture. We obviously suffer by his fall; and, if he had stood, we might have been benefited by it in some way: yet some of his progeny, we know not how early or how late, might, by virtue of their freedom, have introduced sin and all its miserable attendants into the world. In this view it would rather seem that the fall of the *first* pair was a benefit to mankind; because the partial though extensive introduction of sin, might have caused many to perish irretrievably, there being no provision for their escape; whereas the foreseen universality of the disorder led, in the exuberance of the Divine mercy, to the gracious plan which furnishes us with a universal and all-sufficient remedy. But on such a topic it behoves us to speak with reverence: I have ventured simply to suggest this thought, because I have found it tend to remove from the minds of well-disposed but undecided men, one of their greatest objections to the doctrine of "the fall."

Mosaic account of the Fall of Man. 1st. They ask, why was so strange an act of obedience as that of refraining from eating a particular fruit, exacted of Adam and Eve? 2dly. How could eating that fruit destroy the perfection of their nature, and entail guilt and misery upon themselves and their latest posterity? 3dly. Why should the *earth* be cursed for the transgression of man?

Supposing we were not able to furnish satisfactory answers to these questions, that circumstance would not justify any person in withholding his assent to the portion of sacred history to which they relate. "*Secret things belong unto God:*" and though he has been graciously pleased to reveal unto us every thing essential to our well-being here, and that is calculated to invite and draw us to eternal felicity hereafter, we have no reason to expect that all the questions, doubts, and speculations, which might be started by ingenious men, should be cleared up by immediate revelation. When an apostle indulged in useless inquiries, the reply of his Master was, "What is that to thee? follow thou me[4];" and if Jesus were speaking to many querists in our days, he might employ similar language. The difficulties, however, to which the present questions relate, are by no means insurmountable. To the first it may be replied, that none but God can be absolutely independent: that dependance in a creature, without some criterion or test of that dependance, is unintelligible, or, in truth, a contradiction; because it would in such case become with regard to that creature a state of independence; that in a free and rational creature this test of dependance should be such as would often remind him of his dependance, and lead him to acknowledge it; that this acknowledgment could only be by obedience, that is, by some restraint of natural liberty; that the first and only man and woman upon earth *could* not be guilty of any of the crimes which arise from the connexion of human beings with society—

[4] John, xxi. 22.

were prevented by mutual affection, from committing any crime with regard to each other—and could therefore only sin by infringing upon the obedience due to their Maker. It seems almost idle to propose such questions, yet it may serve still farther to show the suitableness of the actual prohibition to Adam's state, if we ask, could he be tempted to make *idols*, when he thought himself Lord of all creatures? would a temptation to *sabbath-breaking* avail with him who had no need to work? To *kill*—who? his wife, and be left alone? To *steal* or to *covet*—when every thing was his own? To *bear false witness*—against whom? To commit *adultery*—impossible! Since, then, some restraint of natural liberty was necessary, and some permanent and visible memorial of man's dependance upon his Creator beneficial, what could be more proper and easy than a restraint of his appetite from *one* fruit, amidst an infinite variety of others exquisitely delicious? what more worthy the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being, than the prohibition of a fruit which He knew would be injurious to man? what more kind and merciful than the placing the dangerous and prohibited object (expressly prohibited *because* it was dangerous) in so conspicuous a situation as to preclude the possibility of its being mistaken for any other?

The cavil about this fruit's being an object of temptation, is almost too idle to deserve specific notice; for surely no being can be out of the reach of temptation but God alone. The same may be said respecting the puerile objection founded on the supposed disproportion between the crime and the punishment. "Was man and his posterity to incur death for eating *an apple?*" No. But who ever said this was the case? The sin consisted not simply in eating the fruit, but in *breaking the commandment of God* by so doing.

Besides, though this act of disobedience may appear very trivial to those who do not duly consider it; "a little reflection will render it evident that it contains in

it the seeds of all sin. It was *ingratitude*;—God had, of his free bounty, given to man every thing that could be conducive to his happiness; yet he could not refrain from that one fruit which God had reserved for his own purposes. It was *breach of trust*;—he was placed in the garden to keep and to dress it; every thing else was his own; yet he availed himself of the confidence placed in him, to take what God had told him was to be reserved. It was *rebellion*;—he knowingly put forth his hand to do what God had prohibited. It was *intemperance*;—Eve saw that the tree was good for food and pleasant to the eyes, and she did eat, and gave to her husband also, and he did eat. It was *ambition*; —they imagined that they were to become as gods, knowing good and evil. It was *charging God with falsehood*;—God had said, In the day thou eatest of it thou shalt surely die. Had Adam believed that declaration, he would as soon have eaten of the most deadly poison as of that fruit. But the serpent said, Ye shall not surely die; and Adam believed the serpent rather than God, and proved this by the overt act of eating the fruit. Are these to be represented as forming no just ground of expulsion and exclusion from the Divine presence[5]?"

With regard to the second question, it may be simply necessary to remind the querist, that even now there are fruits, the eating of which will destroy the best bodily and mental constitution upon earth, will inflame the blood, cause frenzies, and in many cases idiotism. Might not, then, some such fruit as now produces these deleterious effects upon the human constitution, operate most unfavourably upon those of our first parents? Might it not, in consequence of its previously endowed properties, ordained for a specific purpose, sow the seeds of disorder and death in their mortal frames—weaken the energy of their minds, and reduce their godlike understandings to the present standard of ordinary men? Might it not destroy the just equilibrium

[5] Carlisle on the Deity of Christ, p. 410.

of their powers, and render passion no longer subordinate to reason—thus occasioning guilt, misery, disease,—and (since man can, by a necessity of his nature, only produce his like) entailing these upon their posterity to the latest ages?—If there be any thing unreasonable in these admissions, I confess I am unable to detect it.

As to the circumstance included in the third question, it was clearly the effect of mercy, not of relentless fury, as the inquiry usually implies. When man by his folly and disobedience had contracted a mortal disease, and had merely the power of communicating to his children that "life" which "is nothing but their *death begun*," surely it was the height of mercy in an insulted God, to take away *some* of its allurements and fascinations from a world which man *must* quit—to make the earth the scene of troubles and disquietude, as soon as life became temporary—that when this was no longer his home, it should no longer be supremely desirable; at the same time graciously assuring the offender, that more than what he had lost by transgression might be regained by repentance, and "turning unto God;" that thus, though

———"Blooming Eden withers in his sight,
Death gives him more than was in Eden lost." YOUNG.

Some persons, and (as I have already hinted) even some Divines, whose minds lean towards the Socinian[6]

[6] I do not wish to give any offence by employing the term *Socinian* in this place: but I am really unable to find any other word that will be both appropriate and distinctive, when applied to the class of Theologians to whom I now refer, and I am not aware that the use of it occasions any doctrine to be ascribed to them which they do not hold. It is not at all essential to our present purpose, to inquire in what minute particulars the opinions of Faustus Socinus differed from those of his uncle Lælius; or in what respects the modern Socinians differ from either: all of them differ from other Christians, by denying the doctrines of original sin, of imputed righteousness, and of Christ's divinity. To call them by the name *Unitarian*, is to give them a name comparatively new, and to concede them a term which they have often unfairly turned against us; although they know that every firm believer in the doctrine of the Trinity as much abhors the notion of a plurality of Gods as they do.

hypothesis, contend that the whole story of the fall of man is *allegorical*. To this it is easy to reply by many obvious arguments. The Scriptures are intended to

Besides, they generally include under the appellation *Unitarian* the *Arians*, who hold at least two doctrines essentially distinct from theirs, namely, that of a propitiation for sin, and that of the divinity of Christ in *some* sense. If this sense, whatever i be, is not equivalent to Christ's being the supreme and only God, the holders of it are in theory Polytheists; and therefore can no more be classed with the Socinian believers in the Unity of God, than with the Trinitarian assertors of the same great truth.

[*Addition to the 3d Edition.*] Mr. FULLAGAR, who has written a pamphlet on the subject of this note, and two or three other gentlemen whom I really esteem, wish me to employ the term *Unitarian* instead of *Socinian*. I am sorry to say that their reasonings and observations have rather strengthened than weakened my objections to the term they request me to adopt. I have told them that if they will present me with *any* term that will be universally admitted as designating the sect, and not in great measure assume the truth of their own system, I will gladly adopt it, but they decline complying with this proposal.

On cool, mature, and conscientious deliberation, I can think of no correct method of employing the word Unitarian in this controversy, but what would, I fear, give these gentlemen greater offence than the term Socinian. It would, for example, be used correctly to designate a class of unbelievers:—*Unitarian Unbelievers*, persons who loudly profess their belief in one God; who believe also, that great part of the New Testament was written by the apostles; yet do not therefore believe it *true*. Unbelievers in general deny the truth of Revealed Religion *in toto*; Unitarian unbelievers deny the truth of all which does not accord with their own theory. They do not deny that the apostles taught that Jesus Christ is "God over all, blessed for evermore," that he died "a sacrifice for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God," that we are "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ," or that it is "by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God;" but they deny the *truth* of these doctrines, notwithstanding the apostles taught them. That is, they believe that they themselves know more of the nature of true religion, than the apostles who were inspired to teach it.

Whether the majority of modern Socinians do or do not belong to this class of speculators, I have no inclination to determine. But *if they do*, I may then add, that unless belief retain all, or nearly all, the essential characteristics of unbelief; and unless true religion be that which, among all known religions professing to regard a Revelation, approximates most nearly to infidelity in its nature and tendencies, *modern Socinianism cannot be the true religion.*

lead us into all truth, to preserve us from all error. But will this be effected by thrusting an allegory into the midst of an important, interesting, and remarkably simple narration, and not furnishing us with the least clue by which we can ascertain where the allegory is interposed between the links of the history? Besides, if the fall of man be allegorical, does it not follow as a necessary consequence, that the redemption of man is allegorical also? for "*as* in Adam all die, *even so* in Christ shall all be made alive[7]." Yet every well-regulated mind revolts from so strange an inference. Again, if the fall of man be allegorical, it follows, by parity of reason, that its effects are allegorical, and the effects of the curse denounced in consequence of that fall are allegorical likewise. How has it happened, then, that moral turpitude has been traced every where, and in all ages? for we have seen that the hypothesis which imputes it to imitation is untenable. And how can it be that the curse should have been always so astonishingly fulfilled, as I showed in the first letter I wrote to you? What, besides the female human species, has "sorrow" during pregnancy,—has, as Aristotle long ago remarked, headaches, vertigos, faintings, loathings, and a sad train of concomitants? What animal besides man is compelled to "*labour*" for necessaries, and even for knowledge? Quadrupeds graze the turf untilled, always drink at an unbrewed stream, sleep on a bed prepared for them by their Creator, are clothed with a garment as durable as themselves, find a paradise in every field, and possess by instinct a knowledge perfect in its kind, needing no cultivation: while man, the "Lord" of these animals, can neither eat, drink, sleep, nor be clothed, but in consequence of labour; obtains his knowledge by an effort, greater and more continuous than all others; and, after all, does not reach the wine in the goblet, but sips merely the dew from the outside—refreshing, it is true, but never *filling*. Call all this, as

[7] 1 Cor. xv. 22.

Moses authorizes you to do, the result of just punishment, and every thing is plain and easy: deny the fall of man, its permanent effects upon mankind in the tendency to sin, the maladies attending pregnancy, and the necessity for labour, and you *must* then be precipitated into the conclusion, that because "Man is unhappy, God is unjust."

There are those, I am aware, who not only refuse their assent to the doctrine of the fall of man, but who advance still farther in the same train of sentiment, and affirm most positively that the notion of the universal depravity of human nature is incompatible with the general tenour and language of the Bible. Let us see how far an unstrained abstract of the sentiments of the principal Scripture writers, as to this particular, will tend to confirm their assertion.

Moses gives us the result of the observation of Deity, and not of a fallible man, when he says, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every imagination* of the thoughts of his heart was only *evil* CONTINUALLY." And again, *after* the Deluge, "The Lord said, The imagination of man's heart is *evil* from his youth[8]."

The language of the PSALMIST, descriptive of himself and of all men in his time, is not less decisive. "Men are *corrupt*; they have done abominable works: there is none that doeth good. They are *all* gone aside; they are altogether become filthy: there is *none* that doeth good, *no, not one*." "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, *who* shall stand?" "In thy sight shall *no man living* be justified[9]."

Job's reprover, ELIPHAZ, inquires, "What is man that *he* should be clean; and one born of a woman that *he* should be righteous? How abominable and filthy is man, which *drinketh iniquity like water*[10]!"

[8] Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21.

[9] Ps. xiv. 1, 3; li. 5; cxxx. 3; cxliii. 2.

[10] Job, xv. 14, 16.

SOLOMON says, "The way of man is froward and strange." "There is not a just man *upon earth*, that doeth good and sinneth not." "God made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions." "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." "The heart is *full of evil*, and madness is in their heart while they live[11]."

The language used by ISAIAH, when influenced by the Spirit of prophecy, is, "Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed. *All we*, like sheep, have gone astray: the Lord hath laid on him the *iniquity of us all*." "We are, *all* as a polluted thing, and all our righteous deeds are as a rejected garment, and our sins, like the wind, have borne us away[12]."

JEREMIAH says, "We have sinned against the Lord our God, *we and our fathers*, from our youth even unto this day." "The heart is *deceitful above all things*, and *desperately wicked*: who can know it[13]?"

MICAH, in like manner, affirms, "There is *none* upright among men[14];" and similar language might be quoted from other of the minor prophets.

The New Testament abounds with declarations equally express and decisive. Thus JESUS CHRIST himself, in his conference with Nicodemus, assumes the fact, that the whole world has sinned[15], and soon after affirms, that "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

The Apostle PETER, on the day of Pentecost, after he had received the Spirit which should "lead him into all truth," said, not to a few great sinners, but to a promiscuous multitude of "Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Cappadocians, Phrygians, Egyptians, Cyreneans, Romans, Cretes, Arabians, Jews, and Proselytes,"—"Repent, and let *every one* of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of

[11] Prov. xxi. 8. Eccles. vii. 20, 29, viii. 11; ix. 3.
[12] Is. xliii. 27; liii. 6; lxiv. 6. Lowth.
[13] Jer. iii. 25; xvii. 9.
[14] Mic. vii. 2. [15] John, iii. 16, 19.

sins[16]." A plain proof that, in the estimation of this inspired apostle, *every one* of them had sins to be remitted.

The Epistles of PAUL are full of passages of the same import. I select the following. When reasoning upon the general subject, but speaking of *himself* as if to avoid giving offence, he says, "I know that in me, that is, *in my flesh*, dwelleth *no good thing*." Again: "Jews and Gentiles are *all* under sin." "*All* have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." "Death hath passed upon all men, inasmuch as *all* have sinned." "By the disobedience of one, *the many* were made sinners." "The Scripture hath included *all together* under sin, that the promise, by faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe." *All* of us likewise lived "formerly in the desires of our flesh, &c.; and were *by nature* children of anger, even as others." "If one died for all, then were *all* in a state of death[17]."

JAMES, who is generally imagined to dwell less upon the peculiarities of the Christian system, than the other apostles, says, "In *many* things we *all* offend[18]."

The Apostle JOHN says, "If we say that we have *no sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the *whole world*" "The *whole world* lieth (in wickedness, or lieth) in subjection to the evil one[19]."

Now, my friend, examine the passages here cited

[16] Acts, ii. 38. I have here quoted from the translation of the New Testament, published in 1808, under the patronage and authority of the Socinians, and I shall continue to do thus, whenever the quotation is intended to establish any doctrinal point which they dispute; unless I conceive their translation erroneous, and in such cases shall specify my reasons for not adopting that version.

[17] Rom. vii. 17; iii. 9, 23; v. 12, 19. Gal. iii. 22. Ephes. ii. 3. 2 Cor. v. 14. Tit. iii. 3.

[18] James, iii. 2.

[19] 1 John, i. 8; ii. 2; v. 19: ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται. Mundus totus in maligno positus est. LEUSD.

attentively, compare them with their respective contexts, to ascertain that they contain the genuine sentiments of the several writers; and then devise, if you can, any means by which I could offer a greater insult to your understanding than by saying, as those from whose sentiments I wish to preserve you often say, "Hence you may safely infer, that the doctrine of the depravity of human nature is not supported by Scripture."

Indeed, it seems next to impossible to deny this doctrine, without at the same time impugning the wisdom of God, as manifested in the economy of redemption. In this there is an amazing apparatus, for which, upon the hypothesis of our opponents, there can be no necessity: for there certainly can be no necessity that "Christ should die for all," if *all* have not sinned. According to this scheme, every human creature must be born of "God," "be created anew," "be quickened," "be reconciled to God by Jesus Christ," "be washed from his sins in His blood." Here, therefore, are requirements and provisions where none are needed, if the doctrine of human depravity be unfounded. God, who alone can see and provide for future contingencies, has fancied there would be a universal apostasy when there has been no such thing,—foretold, by his prophets, that he would provide a way for the restoration of his people, when no restoration was required, —appointed a Saviour to die for the sins of the whole world, and whose "blood" was to wash away the sins of many who had no sins to be thus cancelled. And this, even this, is called "*rational* religion;" a religion that evinces the wisdom and goodness of God, conformably to the most liberal, and pure, and philosophical principles!

"Shall we then continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." Though the powers of man are vitiated, and his inclinations to evil are so strong that they will never be thoroughly subdued but by Divine influences; yet God, who cannot be otherwise than holy, continues still to demand a perfection of

obedience. Ours is a *moral* inability to fulfil the Law; but he who knows the heart can, and has graciously promised he will ultimately destroy this inability, by communications from himself. "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him." Though we cannot of ourselves fulfil what God requires in his Law, yet we "can do all things through Christ, who dwelleth in us." If we "live according to the flesh, we must die hereafter: but if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live[20]." God condescends, by the dispensation of the Gospel, to pardon and accept the humble, sincere, penitent sinner, on account of the perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice of his own Son, who died to deliver his people from the *power* of sin, as well as from the *punishment* due to it. The promises of the New Dispensation relate as well to the recovery of the Divine *image*, as the recovery of the Divine *favour*. On both these accounts we are solicited to come to Christ "that we may have life." The invitations of the Gospel are free and open to *all*; yet, this should not cause us to sink into supineness, or to treat the invaluable gift with indifference; for the blessings of redemption are offered to penitent believers, and to them alone, among those who possess the Scriptures.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIV.

On the Atonement for Sin, by the Death of Jesus Christ.

"God hath so loved the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but enjoy everlasting life[1]." Such is

[20] Rom. viii. 3.

[1] John, iii. 16. When reflecting upon this text, and many others in the New Testament, it has often occurred to me that it would be extremely difficult to defend either our Lord or his apostles from the charge of egregious trifling upon the most solemn subjects, according to that interpretation of Christianity which denies the extent

the remarkable language of the great Head of the Church, concerning himself. It is important for us to determine the precise meaning of this proposition; and therefore to inquire whether we believe in him when we consider him as one who came merely to teach us and to set us an example, or when we farther regard him as one who died *a sacrifice for sin?*

To me it appears that the latter is the correct interpretation of the passage: and that, therefore, though the preaching of "Christ crucified was unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks *foolishness*[2]," both in the primitive and most succeeding times, yet it is a genuine and awfully momentous Christian doctrine, that Christ by his death has made *atonement* or *satisfaction* for the sins of all those who truly repent, and return unto God in the way of sincere though imperfect obedience.

of human depravity, and the doctrine of Christ's Divinity. Thus, in the case before us, a Jewish Ruler, convinced that Jesus Christ was "a teacher sent from God," solicited a conference with him. In the course of it, this Jew hesitated much at the doctrine of regeneration; but his teacher prepared his mind for still more extraordinary discoveries of divine truth, by saying, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of *heavenly* things?" What, then, is the mysterious truth for which the mind of Nicodemus was thus prepared? Why, that "God so loved the world as to send" a *good man* into it! That is, to send a good man as an example to a world that already contained many good men, and to give unto those good men eternal life! Or "God so loved the world as to give," not his Son by nature, but by adoption and elevation from a state of wretchedness and poverty, to inexpressible glory at his own right hand! Who would ever extol so wonderfully the clemency of a monarch that should pretend to give his *own son* to die for rebels, and instead of so doing should adopt one of the most indigent and wretched of his subjects for that purpose? So again, the language of the apostle to Timothy, "Without controversy *great is the mystery of godliness*, God was manifested in the flesh," has an intelligible and important meaning, if it signify that the Divine nature was mysteriously united to human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. But deprive the passage of this interpretation, and give it that of the Socinians, and you cannot, I think, conceive any thing more puerile.

[2] 1 Cor. i. 23.

This great truth (for such I doubt not you will find it to be) has been believed and defended by good men in all ages. Among the Christians of the earliest times, we have, first, *Clemens Romanus* (whose first epistle even Mr. Belsham commends) saying, "Let us look steadfastly to the *Blood* of Christ, and see how precious it is in the sight of God; which, being *shed for our salvation*, has obtained the grace of repentance for all the world." And again, "By the blood of our Lord there shall be redemption to all that believe and hope in God[3]." *Ignatius*, also, in his epistle to the Smyrnæans, says "Now all these things *he suffered for us*, that we might be saved. And he suffered *truly*, as he also truly raised up himself; and not, as some unbelievers say, that he only *seemed* to suffer[4]."

Polycarp, again, in his epistle to the Philippians, quotes 1 Pet. ii. 22—24, in proof of the doctrine of Christ's atonement; adding, "He suffered all this *for us*, that we might live through him." And in the account given of his martyrdom by the church at Smyrna, over which he presided, they speak of it as an indisputable Christian sentiment, that "Christ suffered for the salvation of all such as shall be saved throughout the whole world, *the righteous for the ungodly*[5]."

Let it be recollected that unless this be a true doctrine of Christianity, Ignatius and Polycarp are not, in the restricted sense of the word, *martyrs*, "witnesses of the *truth*;" and farther, that in the case of Polycarp, at whose martyrdom a miracle was wrought, if the doctrine of the atonement is *erroneous*, God permitted a miracle to be wrought, or rather, wrought a miracle, in attestation of a false doctrine, and caused many *thereby* to be seduced into error.

It would be easy to quote pages from Barnabas, Justin Martyr, and the succeeding fathers, that prove their reception of the doctrine of the atonement; but

[3] Clem. Ep. ad Corint. § 7, 12.
[4] Ignat. Ep. ad Smyrn. § 2.
[5] Pol. Ep. ad Phil. § 8. Pol. Mart. § 17.

for the sake of brevity, I shall cite only one more passage, and that from a work of acknowledged antiquity, the *Apostolical Constitutions*, most probably compiled in the third century. In the fine prayer given in the Liturgy for the Eucharist, we read, "He was pleased by thy good will to become man, who was man's Creator; to be under the laws, who was the Legislator; *to be a sacrifice*, who was a High Priest; and reconciled thee to the world, and freed all men from the wrath to come." "He that was the Saviour was condemned; he that was impassible was nailed to the cross; he who was by nature immortal died, and he that is the giver of life was buried, that he might loose those for whose sake he came, from suffering and death[6]."

Descending to later times we find the same doctrine maintained as essential, in the Greek and in most of the reformed churches. It is clearly stated by the venerable fathers of the English church, and by many of the most profound, judicious, and learned of the episcopal clergy. To prove this the three following quotations may suffice.

"We are all miserable persons, sinful persons, damnable persons, justly driven out of paradise, justly excluded from heaven, justly condemned to hell-fire: and yet (see a wonderful token of God's love) he gave us his only begotten Son, us, I say, that were his extreme and deadly enemies, that we, *by virtue of his blood shed upon the cross*, might be clean purged from our sins, and might become righteous again in his sight[7]."

"In correspondence to all the exigences of the case (that God and man both might act their parts in saving us), the blessed eternal Word, the only Son of God, by the good will of his Father, did vouchsafe to intercede for us, and to undertake our redemption: in order thereto voluntarily being sent down from heaven, assuming human flesh, subjecting himself to all the

[6] Const. Apost. lib. viii. cap. 12.

[7] Second Homily on the Passion. See also Art. 31.

infirmities of our frail nature, and to the worst inconveniences of our low condition; therein meriting God's favour to us, by a perfect obedience to the law, and satisfying God's justice by a most patient endurance of pains in our behalf; in completion of all willingly laying down his life *for the ransom of our souls, and pouring forth his blood in sacrifice for our sins*[8]."

"In what particular way the blood of Christ had this efficacy there are not wanting persons who have endeavoured to explain: but I do not find that the Scripture has explained it. We seem to be very much in the dark, concerning the manner in which the ancients understood atonement to be made, i.e. pardon to be obtained by sacrifices. And if the Scripture has, as surely it has, left this matter of the satisfaction of Christ mysterious, left somewhat in it unrevealed, all conjectures about it must be, if not evidently absurd, yet at least uncertain. Nor has any one reason to complain for want of farther information, unless he can show his claim to it.

"Some have endeavoured to explain the efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered for us, beyond what the Scripture has authorized. Others, probably because they could not explain it, have been for taking it away, and confining his office, as Redeemer of the world, to his instruction, example, and government of the church. Whereas the doctrine of the Gospel appears to be, not only that he taught the efficacy of repentance, but rendered it of the efficacy which it is, by what he did and suffered for us: that he obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted unto eternal life: not only that he revealed to sinners, that they were in a capacity of salvation, and how they might obtain it; but moreover that he put them into this capacity of salvation, by what *he did and suffered for them; put us into a capacity of escaping future punishment, and obtaining future happiness.* And it is our wisdom thankfully

[8] Dr. Isaac Barrow's Sermon on the Passion.

to accept the benefit, by performing the conditions upon which it is offered, on our part, without disputing how it was procured on his[9]."

In a question of such moment, however, you will naturally look for something higher than human authority. I shall, therefore, endeavour to convince you from Scripture that *Christ died a sacrifice for sin;* and the evidences I shall adduce will be partly typical, partly prophetical, partly historical, and partly declaratory.

First, then, with regard to the typical evidences of the doctrine of the atonement, besides the practice of sacrifices in general, we have them in several persons and various observances. Thus, we have an express representation of Christ in the brazen serpent in the wilderness, by *looking* upon which the people were cured of the wounds inflicted by the fiery serpents. So, in looking upon Christ by faith, the sting of "that Old Serpent the devil" is taken away. The lifting up of the brazen serpent typified the lifting up of Christ upon the cross. This is no fanciful interpretation of mine; our Lord himself makes the allusion. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up: that every one who believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life[10]."

Another lively representation of Christ's bearing our sins, and taking them away from us, was exhibited in the custom relative to the *scape-goat*[11].

There was also a standing and continual representation of him appointed, in the person of the high priest, under the Law; who, entering into the Holy of Holies once a year with the blood of the great expiatory sacrifice, and *he only*, to make atonement for sin, did thus represent in a lively manner our great High Priest entering into heaven, once for all, with his own blood, to expiate the sins of the whole world. This again is

[9] Butler's Analogy, part ii. ch. 5. [10] John, iii. 14, 15.
[11] Lev. xvi. 21, 22.

not an imaginary interpretation, but it is largely insisted upon by the Apostle Paul[12].

Our deliverance by the death of Christ is typified again in that ordinance of the Law, that the manslayer who fled to one of the cities of refuge should not come out thence till the death of the high priest, and no satisfaction be taken till then; and then he should be acquitted, and "return into the land of his possession[13]."

But the most remarkable type of the atonement of Jesus Christ is the sacrifice of the *paschal Lamb*, in correspondence with which "Christ our Passover is sacrificed in our stead[14]." Justin Martyr, in his conference with Trypho the Jew, evinces from the Scriptures, and the nature of this rite, that it was a type of Christ crucified for the sins of the world. One curious circumstance which he notices, without any contradiction from his learned opponent, is this: "The paschal lamb (says he), which was to be entirely roasted, was a symbol of the punishment of the cross, which was inflicted on Christ: for the lamb which was roasted was so placed as to resemble *the figure of a cross:* with one spit it was pierced longitudinally, from the tail to the head; with another it was transfixed through the shoulders, so that the fore legs became *extended*[15]." The same learned apologist has another passage still more extraordinary, in relation to this ceremony. The Jews, he affirms, expunged passages from their sacred writings which bore testimony to the vicarious sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, and among them the following: When Ezra celebrated the passover (as is related Ezra, ch. vi. 19, &c.), Justin says he spoke thus:—"And Ezra spoke unto the people, and said, This

[12] Heb. vii. viii. ix. x. Consult *Owen* and *Maclean* on the Hebrews; also Outram's Dissertations on Sacrifices, and the judicious and instructive observations of Dr. J. P. Smith, in his "Four Discourses on the Sacrifice and Priesthood of Jesus Christ."

[13] Num. xxxv. 6, 25—28. [14] 1 Cor. v. 7. Vide the Greek.

[15] Just. Martyri Opera ab Oberthur, vol. ii. p. 106.

Passover is our *Saviour* and our *Refuge:* and if ye shall understand and ponder it in your hearts, that we shall afflict *him* for a sign; and if afterwards we shall believe on *him*, this place shall not be desolated for ever, saith the Lord of hosts. But if ye will not believe on *him*, nor hear *his* preaching, ye shall be a laughing-stock to the Gentiles." This, Justin asserts, the Jews blotted from the Septuagint translation; and if so, they took care to expunge it from the Hebrew likewise; for, at present, it exists in neither[16]. Another circumstance connected with the passover is recorded in the Mishna. After the blood was sprinkled, the lamb was hung up and flayed. This *hanging up* was deemed so essential a part of the ceremony, that if there was no convenience to suspend the lamb, two men standing with their hands on each other's shoulders had the lamb suspended from their arms till the skin was taken off[17]. These are manifestly typical of Christ's crucifixion and sacrifice.

In the second place, let me point to the prophetical evidence of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. "Those things (says Peter), which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should *suffer*, he hath fulfilled[18]." Numerous are the passages in the prophecies which delare that the Messiah should suffer; the following, which declare *why* he should suffer, are given by Isaiah and Daniel; and they are quite sufficient for our present purpose:

"Surely our infirmities he hath borne:
And our sorrows he hath carried them."
"He was wounded for *our* transgressions;
Was smitten for *our* iniquities:
The chastisement by which *our* peace is effected was laid upon him;
And by his bruises *we* are healed."
"Jehovah hath made *to light upon him the iniquity of us all.*"
"For the transgression of my people he was *smitten to death.*"

---

16 Just. Martyri Opera ab Oberthur, vol. ii. p. 196.

17 Dr. A. Clarke on the Eucharist, p. 35.

18 Acts, iii. 18.

"Although he had done no wrong,
Neither was there any guile in his mouth:
Yet it pleased Jehovah to crush him with affliction."
"Of the travail of his soul he shall see, and be satisfied:
By the knowledge of him shall my servant justify many;
For *the punishment of their iniquities he shall bear.*"
"He poured out his soul unto death;
And was numbered with the transgressors;
And he *bare the sin of the many*;
And made intercession for the transgressors[19]."

To the same effect Daniel predicts that the "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself; but to *make reconciliation for iniquity,* and to bring in everlasting righteousness."

By historical evidence that Christ died as a sacrifice for sin, which I intended to produce in the third place, I mean especially that which arises from the consideration of his mental "agony" previously to his crucifixion, and at that solemn event. When he was at Gethsemane, the evening on which he was betrayed, the Evangelist Matthew says, he "began to be very sorrowful and *full of anguish,* and said to his disciples, My soul is *very sorrowful,* even unto death[20]." Mark, in like manner, says, "he began to be *greatly astonished,* and to be *full of anguish*[21]." Indeed, the original language employed by Mark conveys a stronger sense than that in this translation; for ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι imports the most shocking mixture of terror and amazement; and περίλυπος, in the next verse, intimates that he felt on every side surrounded with sorrow, and pressed down with despondency. While thus "drinking of the brook by the way[22]," *thrice* did he pray to his Father to "take away the bitter cup," and though it was in the cool of the evening, "the sweat," occa-

19 Lowth's Isaiah, liii. 4—6, 8—12. Dan. ix. 24, 26. See also Zechariah, xiii. 1, where, though the name of the Messiah does not appear, the language is very expressive and fully to the purpose, obviously pointing, as Blaney and Secker remark, to "the blood of Christ (1 John, i. 7) which cleanseth from all sin."

20 Matt. xxvi. 37, 38. 21 Mark, xiv. 33, 34.

22 Ps. cx. 7.

sioned by the agony of his mind "was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground[23]." And when hanging on the cross, his piteous and heart-rending exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me[24]?" doubtless arose from the want of a comfortable sense of God's presence.

Now whence arose this agony, this interruption of the sense of God's presence, this intense feeling of destitution, during our Lord's great extremity, but from the necessity that he should *suffer*? Bodily pain might have been lost in enjoyment, even during crucifixion (as has been manifested in the delights of some martyrs in the midst of their tortures); but in that case the "soul" of the Messiah could not have been "an offering for sin," as Isaiah predicted it must be. To this end it was that it "pleased Jehovah to *crush him with affliction*:" and it is next to impossible to meditate upon his pathetic exclamations amid his severe sufferings, without adopting again the recently quoted language of the same prophet,—

> "*Surely* OUR *infirmities he hath borne;*
> *And* OUR *sorrows he hath carried.*"

If this explication be rejected, it is natural to ask upon what principles of equitable retribution, or of consistency of character, can that extreme anguish be accounted for, which was endured by a pure and perfect being, who had not on his own account "one recollection tinged with remorse, or one anticipation mingled with dread?" This question admits but of a single answer, and that in my estimation a very absurd one: for, to allot a series of exquisite sufferings to an individual who is without sin, and with regard to whom of course they cannot be penal, and at the termination of his life, when they cannot be corrective, merely for the

[23] Luke, xxii. 44.

[24] Matt. xxvii. 46. On this subject see some very profound and exquisite reflections in Hooker's Eccles. Polity, lib. v. § 48, p. 202, Ed. of 1666.

purpose of calling into exercise "patience and resignation," and *thus* tending to "our benefit and example[25]," is to adopt a mode of government entirely irreconcileable with all "rational" ideas of wisdom and justice, and completely repugnant to every attribute of Deity.

The answer here adverted to, is, moreover, as contrary to matter of fact as it is to reason: for if the doctrine of *satisfaction* be denied, Jesus Christ did *not* present a splendid example of patience and resignation. Compare his behaviour under suffering with that of other martyrs, many, for example, in the third century. *He* suffered for the space of a few hours only; *they* were made to sustain sufferings for days, weeks, months, nay, in some cases, years. *He* suffered the punishment of the cross; *they* have agonized under boiling oil, melted lead, plates of hot iron; or have been broiled for *days* over a slow fire, or shut up in fiercely glowing brazen bulls; or have had their members cut and torn off, one after another, in tedious and barbarous succession. Yet *he* lamented, and *they* triumphed. Is not this infinitely astonishing, upon any other theory of religion than ours? Is it not incomprehensible that the Master of our faith, the "Captain of our salvation," should be abashed and astounded at the sight or even the *contemplation* of death, and that his servants and followers should triumph in the midst of unequalled torments? The one is seized with sorrow even unto death; the others are transported with joy. The one sweats as it were drops of blood at the approach of

[25] Fellows's Theology, vol. i. p. 210. They who assign this reason for our Lord's sufferings should, before they urge it confidently, free it from an objection advanced by themselves against our opinions. For even this would be to suffer for us,—for our good. If it be *just* in God to permit the innocent to suffer for such an end as this, why should it be *unjust* in him to permit him to suffer for that which we specify as the true cause of his suffering? "Can it be *just* in God (asks Dr. Wardlaw) to inflict sufferings on the innocent for an *inferior* end, and yet *unjust* in him to inflict the same sufferings, on the same person, for an end *obviously and incalculably superior!*" Sermons, p. 217.

death; the others behold a divine hand wiping off their blood, but not their *tears*, for none do they shed. The one complains that God forsakes him; the others cry aloud with rapture that they behold Him stretching forth his hands to encourage and invite them to him!

All this cannot be because his bodily torment is greater than theirs; nor can it be, because they have more internal strength and holiness than he has. But it is, because God administers more comfort to them than to him. Yet why so, if Jesus Christ be his "Son in whom he is well pleased?" Why, indeed, but because he regards him as *our* pledge, having constituted him "a sin-offering for us?"

Contrast, again, the dismal agony of our Lord with the holy serenity of *Stephen*, or the joyful anticipation of *Ignatius*, or the heroic fortitude of *Blandina*, whose patience outstood the successive labours of a series of tormentors[26]; and then ask—If the approbation of God ordinarily comforts those who suffer for righteousness' sake, could it not much better have consoled Jesus Christ? If the certainty of possessing an eternal life of bliss makes the martyrs leap with joy and exultation when they are about to lose a temporal life, shall not a like certainty, superadded to that of "finishing the work for which his Father sent him into the world," fill Jesus with joy, too? Shall *men*, who are accustomed to love the earth, rejoice to leave it; and shall *Jesus Christ*, who loves heaven alone, be smitten with a thousand mortal terrors because he is going thither? How truly inexplicable must all this for ever remain, if the orthodox hypothesis be rejected.

Before I produce the fourth class of evidences from the Scripture, or those which are positively declaratory, I request you will bear in mind, that the New Testament, being intended for universal use, and of course for that of plain unlettered men as well as others, does not deal in logical distinctions and metaphysical subtleties, but conveys its momentous truths in the simplest

[26] Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. cap. I.

language; and, to rivet them the more firmly upon the mind, often has recourse to a variety of apt and striking metaphors and allusions, to communicate the same general idea. Thus, with regard to atonement, and words of analogous import, correct notions may be readily obtained when the different lights in which *sin* is represented are contemplated. If, for example, sin be regarded as a breach of the law, which calls down its curses, and excites God's anger, then an *atonement* (which literally signifies a *covering*) screens from the curses of the law, covers, or appeases, or propitiates the angry countenance of Deity. If sin be that which interrupts the friendship which would otherwise subsist between man and his Maker, then what is needed is something to procure *reconciliation* between the parties at variance. If sin be considered as a *debt* incurred by man, then what he requires is something which will give *satisfaction* for that debt. If sin be depicted as *slavery* to Satan, then the grand requisite is a *ransom*. If sin be described as an *impurity*, then what the sinner needs is something that will *purge* or *wash* it away. All these, and perhaps some other views of sin, its effects, and the means of cancelling them, are included in that *sacrifice* and offering for sin, in consequence of which "iniquity is not imputed, transgression is *forgiven*, and sin *covered*[27]."

These observations being premised, I shall transcribe some passages from the New Testament, in which the doctrine of Jesus Christ's surrendering his life as an atonement for sin is plainly declared, beginning with those that were furnished during his own personal ministry. "The Son of man (says he) came not to be served, but to serve; and to give his life *a ransom* for many[28]." "I lay down *my life* for the sheep[29]." "The bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world[30]." And when he instituted the Eucharist, which was expressly intended, not to

[27] Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.
[28] Matt. xx. 28.
[29] John, x. 15.
[30] John, vi. 51.

remind his disciples of the purity of his conduct, or the exemplary holiness of his life, but to "show forth the Lord's *death* till he come[31]," Judas (whose sins were not to be remitted[32]) having previously departed, He took bread and brake it, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you[33]." And taking the cup and blessing it, He said, "Drink ye all out of it: for this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the *remission of sins*[34]." Giving to these passages their natural and obvious import, it seems impossible to eradicate the doctrine of the atonement for sin, made by Christ's death, from the minds of plain, humble, sincere Christians, so long as the ordinance of the Eucharist continues to be observed with reference to the time and manner of its institution. I have not forgotten that a writer of great ingenuity, who seems to have carefully weighed the meaning of all words except those which relate to religious topics, has recently had the boldness to say, that "If the Unitarian Society, on their English Anniversary Festival, were to *consecrate the first goblet to the immortal memory of the great founder of their faith*, they would more faithfully copy the spirit of his institution than any rival creedsmen, and would accomplish the association of religion with *the natural and habitual pleasures of mankind*[35]." But this attempt at transmuting the orgies of Bacchus into a Christian rite will not succeed with those who have beheld by faith "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world[36]." No;

[31] 1 Cor. xi. 26. [32] Matt. xxvi. 24.
[33] Luke, xxii. 19. [34] Matt. xxvi. 28.
[35] Synonymic Elucidations, in Athenæum, vol. iv. p. 497. Such of my readers as wish to judge fully of this writer's horrid perversion of terms in allusion to the most solemn of all religious ordinances, may peruse an account of the "Unitarian Tavern Dinner," in Nos. 7 and 8 of the Freethinking Christian's Magazine;—a work to which I should not refer, were it not to show that even Infidels, and they of no common kind, are disgusted that this anniversary revel should be misnamed a religious commemoration.
[36] John, i. 29.

"the enemies of this heart-reviving truth might as well hope to pierce through a coat of mail with a straw, as to reach such a truth, defended by such an ordinance as this, by any of their trifling sophistries[37]!"

In showing the opinion of the apostles as to this fundamental point, my business must be selection: for no one can read the Epistles without perceiving that the grand object of their authors is to preach "Christ *crucified*;" and that for every reference to the *life* of the Redeemer there may be found at least *ten* triumphant appeals to the benefits resulting from his *death*. Thus St. Paul: "God forbid (or let it not be) that I should glory, except in the *cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Christ our passover is *sacrificed in our stead*." "Christ died in due season *for the ungodly*: while we were still *sinners* Christ *died* for us." "Through our Lord Jesus Christ we have now received the *reconciliation*." "Ye have been bought with *a price*." "Christ died *for our sins*, according to the Scriptures." "Christ *died for all*, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died and rose again for them." "God hath made him who knew no sin to be a *sin for us*." Thus, "he hath favoured us through the beloved Son; through whom we have redemption *by his blood*, even *forgiveness* of our offences." "*Reconciling* both unto God in one body *by the cross*." "Christ gave himself up *for us*, an offering and a *sacrifice* to God." "Christ Jesus gave himself a *ransom* for all." "Who gave himself *for us*, that he might *redeem* us from *all iniquity*." "Christ by his own *blood* obtained an everlasting *redemption*." "Where a covenant is, there is a necessity for the *death* of that which establishes the covenant." "So Christ was *offered* once to *bear away the sins* of the many." "He who despised the law of Moses died without mercy; of how much greater punishment, think ye, will *he* be deemed worthy who hath trodden under foot the *Son of God*, and hath counted the *blood of the covenant*, by

[37] Doddridge's Fam. Expos. note f, on Matt. xxvi.

which he was *sanctified*, an unholy [or unimportant] thing[38]?"

As these texts are of themselves sufficient to establish the point in question, I shall merely quote one or two from the other apostles: PETER, for example, says, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, from your vain behaviour delivered down by your fathers; but with the precious *blood of Christ*, as of a spotless and unblemished Lamb." "Christ suffered for you:" "and himself *bare our sins* in his own body *on the cross*." "Christ suffered once for *sins*, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might *bring us to God*." And to the same purpose is the language of JOHN: "The blood of Jesus Christ *cleanseth us from all sins*." "Jesus Christ is the *propitiation for our sins;* and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son, to be *a propitiation for our sins*[39]."

Surely, if language have any definite meaning, these texts declare the innocence of Jesus Christ who suffered, and the iniquities of those for whom he suffered; they declare, that a righteous person died for the guilty, and that thereby the guilty were saved. Hence arises the grand difference between the dispensations of the Law and of Grace. The Law requires perfect obedience and satisfaction to be wrought out in our

[38] Gal. vi. 14. 1 Cor. v. 7. Rom. v. 6, 8, 11. 1 Cor. vi. 20; xv. 3. 2 Cor. v. 15, 21. Eph. i. 7; ii. 16; v. 2. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Tit. ii. 14. Heb. ix. 11, 16, 28; x. 28, 29. See also Heb. ii. 10; and ix. 22.

[39] 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; ii. 21, 24; iii. 18. 1 John, i. 7; ii. 2; iv. 10. Consult also Rev. i. 5; v. 9; xiii. 8.

Objections are sometimes raised upon a mere misunderstanding of the terms. Thus, the language, he "bare the sins of many," and he was "numbered with the transgressors," implies that he was treated as a guilty person. The interpretation is unobjectionable, if we distinguish, as accurate theologians always do, between "guilt in the sense of legal answerableness (*reatus*), and of blameworthiness (*culpa*);" and remember that it is in the former sense alone that we here employ it.

persons; Grace allows of the obedience and satisfaction of a substitute. The Law makes no allowance for the least failure, but says, "He that offendeth in the least tittle is guilty of all; the soul that sinneth shall *die:*" Grace says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The Law demands sternly, "Pay me that thou owest:" but Grace points "to the hand-writing of ordinances, blotted out and cancelled by the blood of Jesus;" so that we can say, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed," who manifested his love to his friend Lazarus by his *tears,* and to us by shedding his *blood* for us, *while we were enemies!*

"A truth so strange, 'twere bold to think it true;
If not far bolder still to disbelieve." YOUNG.

It is the great glory of the Gospel that it gives such a satisfactory account of the method whereby sin may be pardoned, in a manner consistent with the honours of Divine government; yet so astonishing and surpassing human expectation is the plan of redemption we are now contemplating, that many, who notwithstanding profess themselves Christians, object against it; and that, unfortunately, in a very dogmatical and assuming tone. Thus, Faustus Socinus:—"If not once only, but *often,* it should be written in the Sacred Scriptures, that Christ made satisfaction to God for sins, I would not, therefore, believe it." And again, "Any, even the *greatest force* is to be used with words, rather than take them in this the obvious sense[40]." Sentiments like these, though they seem much more compatible with Deism than with any principles that can be incorporated with the belief that the Scriptures are of Divine authority, are avowed by many of the professors of "Rational Religion" (as it is often arrogantly called) in the present day. Yet I conceive the difficulties hanging about the subject, and which occasion the

[40] Socinus on the Satisfaction, and in his Second Epistle to Balcerimicius.

adoption of such strong language, may be removed with tolerable facility.

It is asserted, for instance, in the first place, that if the doctrine of atonement for sin be true, then, " since it was only obscurely declared by our Lord, he cannot be said to have taught his own religion." This argument, I think I have already shown in the present letter, cannot very fairly be urged on the present occasion, since the language of our Lord is too unequivocal to be easily misunderstood: yet, as similar reasoning is advanced against other branches of Christian doctrine, it at least deserves a specific reply. Let it be observed, then, first, that, as both Macknight and Magee have correctly stated it, " the object of our Saviour's life was to *supply the subject*, not to *promulgate the doctrines* of the Gospel:" next, that an infidel might, upon the principles here adverted to, deny Christ's Messiahship, and the doctrine of the resurrection; and might ask, Why did not Christ, on his first advent, openly declare that he was the Messiah? Why did not he fully develop the doctrine which Dr. Priestley says it was " the *sole* object of his mission to ascertain and exemplify, namely, that of a resurrection and a future state?" Let it be remarked farther, that if Christ had publicly and plainly preached the doctrine of the atonement of his death to *all* who heard him, he must of course have predicted openly that he should die as a sacrifice; and this might have provoked the malicious Jews either to kill him before his hour was come, to prevent his teaching, and pretend that they only fulfilled his own prophecy; or to lay hold of him, and keep him a prisoner without killing him, for the purpose of falsifying the prophecies of his death, and making void his doctrine of atonement."

Let it be observed again, that many passages in the writings of the evangelists prove decisively that it was not the design of our Lord in his lifetime, and indeed " not expedient," to publish the grace of the Gospel so fully and clearly as it was afterwards to be revealed *to*

and *by* his apostles. But shortly before his death he said unto them, "I have still *many* things to say unto you; but ye *cannot bear them now*. However, when he cometh, even the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into *all* truth: for he will not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear he will speak; and he will show you things to come. He will *glorify me*: for he will *receive of mine, and will declare it unto you*[41]." Here, then, the question is simply, Was this production accomplished, or was it not? And the only answer a consistent believer in the New Testament can give, is, that it was fulfilled in the forty days' communication our Lord had with his disciples after his resurrection, when he spake to them "of things *pertaining to the kingdom of God*[42]," and in the gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Either, these truths "pertaining to the kingdom of God" were revealed for the benefit of the church in all ages, or they were not. If they were not, why were they revealed at all? If they were, where are they to be found except in the writings of the apostles? And if the writings of the apostles contain them, is it not the most stupendous folly or arrogance to deny, in the positive tone of many Socinians, that those writings are of the same divine veracity, authority, and efficacy, as the rest of Scripture; or that He who dictated them taught his own religion?

A second objection, frequently advanced with great vehemence and confidence, and to which I have already adverted in note 25 of this letter, is, that "it does not agree with the moral perfections of God to punish sin in a surety; that it is unjust and inequitable to appoint such a way of salvation as would require an innocent creature to suffer that the offender may be spared." Indeed! Then how was it that Abel, who slew the innocent "firstlings of his flock," thus "offered unto God a *more excellent* sacrifice than Cain," who "brought of the fruit of the *ground* an offering unto the Lord[43]," and by so doing avoided the *injustice* of

[41] John, xvi. 13, 14. [42] Acts, i. 3. [43] Gen. iv. 3, 4. Heb. xi. 4.

shedding innocent blood? This objection, as you must at once perceive, by aiming at too much, accomplishes nothing; for it applies just as forcibly against sacrifices of every kind, as against that of the Redeemer; and should, therefore, come from a professed unbeliever, and not from one who bows to "the law and the testimony." Now, taking the question for a moment upon its broadest ground, it is a notorious and incontrovertible fact, that *sacrifices* have almost universally prevailed in all ages and in all countries, as well the most civilized as the most barbarous. Reasoning from this fact, we say, either sacrifices had *some* foundation in true religion, which led the whole world to practise them for four thousand years, and the heathen part of the world to practise them till the present time; or else the principle of reason so much boasted of for its efficacy and energy, which suffered men to pursue this train of idiotism and inhumanity for six thousand years, is a very defective and insufficient guide. One of these positions is indisputable. If the latter be admitted, then Revelation was absolutely necessary to reform and instruct the world: if the former, then, sacrifices were of Divine institution. The adversaries of Revelation may take their choice of these alternatives[44].

[44] "It has been made a question (says the late Mr. Jones, of Nayland), by those who question every thing, whether sacrifices were of Divine Institution. But sacrifices are *descriptive;* and as the thing described is the redemption of man by the shedding of the blood of Christ, which never could be known but by revelation; the supposition that sacrifice could be of human invention *is an absurdity.* It is as if we were to imagine that words could be invented by those who had no knowledge of things; or that *signs* could be brought into use without any prior idea of the *things signified.* The knowledge of a redeemer was first given to man; and the observation of sacrifice was the expression of that knowledge by a significant act. All mankind were derived from those to whom this knowledge was first given; and therefore all nations of the world, in all times of the world, did in some form or other retain the observation of sacrifice, for the putting away of sin."—*Lectures on the Hebrews.*

For some instructive remarks on the distinction between the *fact* and the *doctrine* of the atonement, see the Rev. R. Hall, on the Essential Difference between Christian Baptism and the Baptism of John, p. 40, 41, &c.

But to those who allow the truth of the Mosaic history, and will therein trace the origin of sacrifices, it must appear evident, that sacrifice was from the beginning (as in the case of Abel) acceptable to God; and that *faith* made it so:—that offerings of *creatures* were sacrifices of atonement for sin; while offerings of *fruits* were thank-offerings:—that sacrifices for sin enforced plainly, though typically, these two important truths: 1st, that every sin caused a forfeiture of the offender's life; and, 2dly, that God vouchsafed notwithstanding to have mercy on the sinner, and to accept of some other life as a *ransom*, in lieu of that forfeiture. Sacrifices, in short, were, from the first, seals of the covenant of mercy, into which God entered with man immediately after the fall; and there is nothing in point of their injustice that does not apply with greater force against the patriarchal and Mosaic sacrifices, than against that of Jesus Christ; for this latter, it must not be forgotten, was perfectly *voluntary*. His own language, even according to the Socinian translation of it, was, "For *this* my Father loveth me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. *None taketh it from me; but I lay it down* OF MYSELF. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to receive it again[45]." This completely annihilates the force of the objection, since it shows that the sufferings and death of Christ, being voluntary, must necessarily be consistent with the equity and justice of God, although the innocent suffered that the guilty might be redeemed: that being, indeed, the only way in which the innocent *can* suffer without infringing upon justice.

It is of some importance to remark, that many of those who are loudest and most eager in urging this objection admit that Jesus suffered for our *benefit;* which is much the same as refuting their own argument: for surely there is just as little reason why an innocent person should suffer for the *benefit* of a criminal, as that he should suffer in his *stead*. Indeed, as Archbishop Tillotson remarks, "If the matter were

[45] John, x. 17, 18.

searched to the bottom, all this perverse contention about our Saviour's suffering for our benefit, but not in our stead, will signify just nothing. For if Christ died for our benefit, so as some way or other, *by virtue of his death and sufferings*, to save us from the wrath of God, and to procure our escape from eternal death; this, for aught I know, is all that any body means by his dying in our stead. For he that dies with an intention to do that benefit to another, as to *save him from death*, doth certainly to all intents and purposes die in his place and stead. And if they will grant this to be their meaning, the controversy is at an end; and both sides are agreed in the thing, and do only differ in the phrase and manner of expression; which is, to seek a quarrel and an occasion of difference where there is no real ground for it; a thing which ought to be very far from reasonable and peaceable minds. For many of the Socinians say, that our Saviour's voluntary obedience and sufferings procured his exaltation at the right hand of God, and power and authority to forgive sins, and to give eternal life to as many as he pleased; so that they grant that his obedience and sufferings, in the meritorious consequence of them, redound to our benefit and advantage as much as we pretend and say they do; only they are loath in express terms to acknowledge that Christ died in our stead: and this, for no other reason that I can imagine, but *because they have denied it so often and so long.*"

The last objection I shall here notice has been stated in the following terms: "According to the usual theory of atonement, none less than a Divine person can bear away the sins of the whole world; yet a Divine person cannot atone for sin, because Deity cannot die." This, it must be acknowledged, presents a difficulty of formidable aspect; yet it is one which arises rather from our ignorance of the nature of death, than from any inadequate views of the nature of atonement. The following observations will, I trust, greatly diminish the difficulty, if they do not remove it. The death of

a being constituted of a material and an immaterial part, does not consist in a perfect extinction of its existence, but in a separation of its constituents parts. What we call the death of an animal is a separation of the spiritual principle of animation and sensation from the organized matter which it animated. The death of a man is, in a similar manner, the separation of the spiritual source of sensation, volition, and action, from the material organization which forms the human body. "The body without the spirit is dead[46];" it is no longer an active, thinking, sensitive, determining being, but an insensible, inactive lump of clay. After death the *man* no longer exists in his compound nature; his constituents parts are separated; his body to be still farther decomposed and divided, but his soul to remain entire, a single, indivisible, indestructible soul as before. It does not follow, therefore, that the soul is dead: indeed, strictly speaking, a *soul* cannot die. None but a compound being can undergo that separation which constitutes death. But a soul is simple and indivisible; for if it were divisible into two or more parts, those parts, each partaking of the same spiritual essence, would each possess distinct consciousness, and would each, therefore, become a distinct soul; which is repugnant to reason. Hence it appears that a soul, though it may be annihilated by the power of Him who created it, cannot *die*. What is dead *exists*, however its mode of subsistence be changed; but what is annihilated has *no* existence. Admitting this, the objection must be relinquished; for, allowing Christ to have a soul (which all the Humanitarians do allow), it might as pertinently be objected, that since his *soul* cannot die, he cannot atone for sin: and therefore, since nothing Divine, nor any thing human, can atone for sin, and nothing else can (see Hebrews x. 4), it would result that sin cannot be atoned for at all, which is contrary to the uniform tenour of Scripture.

From this view of the subject it follows that, when

[46] James, ii. 26.

the Divine and human spirit of the Redeemer ceased to animate his body, the *person* of Jesus Christ as properly died as did that of Moses, David, or any other, when such individual passed from the present state of existence. It follows also, that the death of Jesus Christ neither caused any mutation in his Divine nature, nor in the powers and properties of his soul. As to the value or efficacy of his death, that manifestly depends upon the value of his person in the scale of being. Among animated beings relative importance is estimated by the proportionate extent to which the spirits which animate them carry their actions or their influence. Thus we place a sparrow, a pigeon, and an eagle, successively higher in the scale: in like manner, a sheep, an ox, an elephant, would have assigned to them successively increased values. A rational and accountable being is naturally placed above all these: of rational beings, a man is reckoned superior to a child; a philosopher, to a peasant; a monarch, to one of his subjects: and the effects resulting from their deaths are proportionally felt. Hence, since Jesus Christ is, according to the system I am now explaining, infinitely wiser than the profoundest philosopher, infinitely more powerful than the greatest monarch, his death must be sufficiently efficacious to cancel all the guilt which rendered that awful event necessary. "Possessing (as Dr. Abbadie remarks) the glory of the Deity in the midst of infirmities and miseries incident to a nature like our own, he need undergo but one death of an infinite value; and God who gave him to 'suffer for us,' made us a present without limit." The sum of all, to adopt the condensed emphatic phraseology of Bishop Beveridge, is this:—"Man can suffer, but he cannot satisfy; God can satisfy, but he cannot suffer: but Christ, being both God and man, can both suffer and satisfy; and so is perfectly fit, both to suffer for man, and to make satisfaction unto God, to reconcile God to man, and man to God."

Thus have I endeavoured to state, establish, and defend from the principal objections, that great and fun-

damental doctrine of the new or Christian dispensation, whence it derived the name Ευαγγελιον, godspell, *Gospel, good or joyful news.* It remains that I solicit your earnest attention to some striking and useful reflections upon the sufferings and cross of Christ, from authors who have already furnished me with quotations in this letter.

"To the exterior view and carnal sense of men, our Lord was then (on the cross) indeed exposed to scorn and shame; but, to spiritual and sincere discerning, all his and our enemies did there hang up as objects of contempt, utterly overthrown and undone.

"There the devil, that strong and sturdy one, did hang up bound in chains, disarmed and rifled, quite baffled and confounded, mankind being rescued from his tyrannic power.

"There the world, with its vain pomps, its counterfeit beauties, its bewitching pleasures, its fondly admired excellences, did hang up all defaced and disparaged; as it appeared to St. Paul: for *God forbid* (saith he) *that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ, by which the world is crucified to me and I unto the world.*

"There, in a most lively representation, and most admirable pattern, was exhibited *the mortification of our flesh,* with its affections and lusts; and our *old man was crucified that the body of sin might be destroyed.*

"There our sins, being (as St. Peter telleth us) *carried up by him unto the gibbet,* did hang as marks of his victorious prowess, as malefactors, by him *condemned in the flesh,* as objects of our horror and hatred.

"There death itself hung gasping, with its sting pulled out, and all its terrors quelled; his death having prevented ours, and induced immortality.

"There all wrath, *enmity,* strife (the banes of comfortable life), did hang *abolished in his flesh* and *slain upon the cross, by the blood whereof he made peace, and reconciled all things in heaven and earth.*

"This consideration is, farther, most useful to render us very humble and sensible of our weakness, our

vileness, our wretchedness. For how low was that our fall, from which we could not be raised without such a depression of God's only Son? How great is that impotency, which needed such a succour to relieve it? How abominable must be that iniquity, which might not be expiated without so costly a sacrifice? How deplorable is that misery, which could not be removed without commutation of so strange a suffering? Would the Son of God have so *emptied* (Ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε. Phil. ii. 7) and debased himself for nothing? Would he have endured such pains and ignominies for a trifle? No, surely; if our guilt had been slight, if our case had been tolerable, the Divine wisdom would have chosen a more cheap and easy remedy for us.

"Is it not madness for us to be conceited of any worth in ourselves, to confide in any *merit of our works*, to glory in any thing belonging to us, to fancy ourselves brave, fine, happy persons, worthy of great respect and esteem; whereas our unworthiness, our demerit, our forlorn estate, did extort from the most gracious God a displeasure needing such a reconciliation, did impose upon the most glorious Son of God a necessity to undergo such a punishment in our behalf?

"Yet, while this contemplation doth breed sober humility, it also should preserve us from base abjectness of mind; for it doth evidently demonstrate that, according to God's infallible judgment, we are very considerable; that our souls are capable of high regard; that it is a great pity we should be lost and abandoned to ruin. For surely, had not God much esteemed and respected us, he would not for our sakes have so debased himself, or deigned to endure so much for our recovery; Divine justice would not have exacted or accepted such a ransom for our souls, had they been of little worth. We should not therefore slight ourselves, nor demean ourselves like sorry contemptible wretches, as if we deserved no consideration, no pity from ourselves; as if we thought our souls not worth saving,

which yet our Lord thought good to purchase at so dear a rate[47]."

To this language of the eloquent and philosophic Dr. Barrow, let me add the following powerful expostulation of our Reformers. "Canst thou think of this, O sinful man, and not tremble within thyself? Canst thou hear it quickly, without remorse of conscience and sorrow of heart? Did Christ suffer his passion for thee, and wilt thou show no compassion towards him? While Christ was yet hanging on the cross, and yielding up the ghost, the Scripture witnesseth that *the veil of the temple did rent in twain, and the earth did quake, that the stones clave asunder; that the graves did open, and the dead bodies rise;* and shall the heart of man be nothing moved to remember how grievously and cruelly he was handled of the Jews for our sins? Shall man show himself to be more hard-hearted than stones, to have less compassion than dead bodies? Call to mind, O sinful creature, and set before thine eyes *Christ crucified:* think thou seest his body stretched out in length upon the cross, his head crowned with sharp thorns, and his hands and his feet pierced with nails, his heart opened with a long spear, his flesh rent and torn with whips, his brows sweating water and blood: think thou hearest him now crying in an intolerable agony to his Father, and saying, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Couldst thou behold this woeful sight, or hear this mournful voice, without tears, considering that he suffered all this not for any desert of his own, but only for the grievousness of thy sins? O that mankind should put the everlasting Son of God to such pains! O that we should be the occasion of his death, and the only cause of his condemnation! May we not justly cry, Woe worth the time that ever we sinned? O, my brethren, let this image of Christ crucified be always printed in our hearts; let it stir us up to the hatred of sin, and provoke our minds

[47] Barrow's Sermon on the Passion.

to the earnest love of Almighty God. For why? is not sin, think you, a grievous thing in his sight, seeing for the transgressing of God's precept he condemned all the world unto perpetual death, and would not be pacified, but only with the blood of his own Son[48]?"

LETTER XV.

On the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

"Four things," said the great and judicious Hooker, "concur to make complete the whole state of our Lord Jesus Christ: his Deity, his manhood, the conjunction of both, and the distinction of the one from the other, being joined in one. Four principal heresies there are which have in those things withstood the truth. *Arians*, by bending themselves against the Deity of Christ; *Apollinarians*, by maiming and misinterpreting that which belongeth to his human nature; *Nestorians*, by rending Christ asunder, and dividing him into two persons; the followers of *Eutiches*, by confounding in his person those natures which they should distinguish. Against these there have been four ancient general councils: the council of Nice, to define against Arians, A.D. 325; the council of Constantinople, against Apollinarians, A. D. 381; that of Ephesus, against Nestorians, A. D. 431; against Eutichians, that of Chalcedon, A. D. 451: the decisions of which may be comprised in four words:

[48] Second Homily on the Passion, p. 359, Oxford edit. 1810. I beg leave to remark here, once for all, that the frequency of my quoting from the Homilies, and other discourses of great men amongst the Episcopalians, does not arise from my supposing they are of superior authority, or that they have clearer views of Scriptural truth, than Baxter, Howe, Watts, Doddridge, and some other eminent Dissenting authors; but from the circumstance that these Letters were originally written for the benefit of a professed member of the Church of England, and because a large portion of those who are adverse to the doctrines I am here defending, and which are so forcibly stated in the "Articles" and "Homilies," fancy themselves to be very "sound Churchmen" notwithstanding.

αληθως *truly*, τελεως *perfectly*, αδιαιρετως *indivisibly*, and ασυγχυτως *distinctly*. The first applied to his being God; and the second to his being Man; the third to his being of both *one*; and the fourth to his still continuing in that one *both*. We may fully, by way of abridgment, comprise whatsoever antiquity hath at large handled, either in declaration of Christian belief, or in refutation of the aforesaid heresies, within the compass of these four heads[1]."

This view of the Messiah's person agrees with the opinion that has most extensively prevailed, among Christians, from the first introduction of Christianity into the world down to the present period. Nor does the mere existence of other opinions by any means militate against the truth of this: for, since evidence, though it be clear, forcible, and satisfactory, does not *necessarily* convince, the human mind being free either to receive evidence with its due weight, or to reject it as defective; it follows that a doctrine, as well as a fact, *may* be disbelieved by minds of a peculiar structure, however preponderating and decisive may be the evidence in its favour. This is undoubted, and an apostle, referring to matters of faith, accounts for it in language which I tremble while I quote:—"If our Gospel *be* veiled, it is veiled to those *that destroy themselves, whose minds the god of this world hath blinded*."

Many learned and ingenious men disbelieve the Divinity of Christ; but neither the process by which they have arrived at their disbelief, nor that by which they endeavour to prove that we are in error, seems calculated to operate strongly upon the minds of those who have been previously persuaded that the Scripture is the production of *inspired* writers, who were so inspired that they might teach doctrines infallibly true (many of which could be known no other way), and whose instructions, therefore, are to be implicitly received. Having ascertained that the Bible is the Word of God,—that none of the discrepances between the

[1] Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, book v. sect. 54.

various existing copies in the original languages affect any doctrine, or any important precept,—and that the translation we adopt is correct,—we have nothing to do but to determine its plain and obvious meaning, and receive it as true[2]. But this is not the plan pursued by those who deny the Divinity of the Messiah. They constantly examine the Scriptures rather as critics, than as humble inquirers after truth: the natural consequence of which is, that they are critical beyond measure, and adopt those "refinements in criticism which make men nauseate what is obvious, and pursue through the mazes of etymology what was never imagined before." This, indeed, is the necessary result of adopting a defective hypothesis. If both the Divine and human nature meet in the person of the Messiah, and if they are essentially distinct though they are inseparably united, then is it to be expected that some passages should clearly announce his Divinity, others as clearly his humanity, while others may (perhaps indistinctly) indicate both. But if Jesus Christ be merely a man, then all those texts which declare his

[2] "It hath been the custom of late to lay too much stress upon Jewish idioms, in the exposition of the didactic parts of the New Testament. The Gospel is a *general* revelation. If it is delivered in a style which is not perspicuous to the illiterate of any nation except the Jewish, it is as much locked up from general apprehension, as if the sacred books had been written in the vernacular gibberish of the Jews of that age. The Holy Spirit, which directed the apostles and the evangelists to the use of the tongue, which in their day was the most generally understood—the Greek—would, for the same reason, it may be presumed, suggest to them a style which might be generally perspicuous. It is therefore a principle with me, that the true sense of any phrase in the New Testament is, for the most part, what may be called a standing sense: that which will be the first to occur to common people of every country, and in every age; and I am apt to think, that the difference between this standing sense and the Jewish sense will, in all cases, be far less than is imagined, or none at all; because, though different languages differ widely in their refined and elevated idioms, common speech is in all languages pretty much the same." Horsley's Letters in Controversy with Dr. Priestley, p. 122, Ed. 3.

Divine nature, or indicate his compound nature, must be either rejected as spurious, or explained away by the arts of criticism. Hence Socinians argue, that when Jesus is called " the Son of man," the words must not only be construed in the most literal, but in the most restricted, sense, so that the word *man* shall be understood to mean *one* particular man: but when he is called "the Son of God," they must be explained to mean knowledge, commission, affection, office (though the *office* of son is a strange vagary, that would enter the mind of none but a Socinian critic), any thing or nothing, provided it be not taken literally. If one phrase of St. John be in favour of the Deity of Christ, it is either a solecism, or it is Hebraical-Greek; if another phrase of the same writer have the same tendency, it is an oratorical flourish, or it is an Atticism, or it is an hyperbole: as if it were not contrary to the entire scope and practice of the sacred writers to employ hyperboles in order *to do prejudice to the glory of God;* which, nevertheless, is done *repeatedly* not only by John, but by all the apostles, if the Socinian hypothesis be true; if in a third place he says, when speaking of Jesus, " We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only Son of the Father[3];" we are told it means " his miracles," which it should seem are " used to express merely a higher degree of *affection.*" If Jesus Christ call himself " the Son of God;" it is a strong expression, conformable to the Eastern phraseology, signifying that he was sent by God; though the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were at least as well acquainted with Eastern phraseology as we are, understood the language literally, and said that Jesus was guilty of " blasphemy, because he made himself *equal* with God[4]." If, as Jerome and Eusebius state, John wrote his Gospel principally in vindication of our Lord's Divinity,

[3] See the Socinian version of John, i. 15, and the notes upon that text, p. 201, 202.

[4] John, v. 18; x. 33.

against Cerinthus and the Ebionites[5], still a critic with a certain turn of mind may manage to elude its force; as does Leclerc, who thus ridiculously renders the first sentence of John's Gospel:—"In the beginning was reason, and reason was *in* God, and reason was God." But as a complete specimen of critical ingenuity attenuated into absurdity, I present you with the late Mr. Theophilus Lindsey's translation of part of the

[5] It is highly probable, however, that John had other heretics in his eye than those above-named, both when writing his Gospel and his First Epistle. Thus the names and titles applied to our Lord at the very commencement of John's Gospel would certainly puzzle, if not silence, those in the first century who were inclined to contend, either that he was a mere *man*, or a Divine *appearance* merely without flesh. Even in the first chapter, he is denominated:—1. The Word. 2. God. 3. The Life. 4. The Light. 5. The True Light. 6. The Only Begotten of the Father. 7. Jesus Christ. 8. The Only Begotten Son. 9. The Christ, or Anointed. 10. That Prophet. 11. The Lord. 12. The Lamb of God. 13. A Man. 14. The Son of God. 15. The Messiah. 16. Jesus of Nazareth. 17. The Son of Joseph. 18. The King of Israel. 19. The Son of Man. Whence this extraordinary diversity of terms, but to designate an extraordinary character, and to excite the utmost attention to the history of the nature, words, actions, and offices of Him in whom, by a glorious unity of design, the diversity centred to constitute at once "The Messenger of the Covenant" and "The Sun of Righteousness?"

So again, when, in his First Epistle, John taught that Jesus Christ "is the Son of God," and that "he came in the flesh," he meant to oppose those who denied his divinity, as well as those who affirmed that his body was only a body in appearance. And hence, as Macknight and others have remarked, the opinions of the Docetæ or Phantasiastæ, on the one hand, and of the Cerinthians and Ebionites, on the other, render it probable, if not certain, that the apostles taught, and the first Christians *believed*, Christ to be both God and man. For, if the Docetæ had not been taught the divinity of Christ, they had no temptation to call in question his humanity. And if the Cerinthians had not been taught the humanity of Christ, they would, in like manner, have felt no temptation to deny his divinity. But regarding it as impossible that both parts of the apostolic doctrine concerning the Messiah *could* be true; one class of these heretics conceived themselves compelled to reject his humanity, that they might more purely maintain his divinity; while the other, to maintain his humanity, thought it equally necessary to reject his divinity. Thus it is that men make shipwreck of faith when they are prepared only to receive the truth by halves.

first chapter of this Gospel. Leclerc's version is not sufficiently unreasonable; we are, therefore, now presented with it after this fashion:

"In the beginning was Wisdom, and Wisdom was with God, and God was Wisdom. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by *it*, and without *it* was nothing made. In *it* was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

"*It* (Divine Wisdom) was in the world, and the world was made by *it*, and the world knew *it* not. *It* came to its own land, and its own people received *it* not. But as many as received *it*, to them *it* gave power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on *its* name.

"And Wisdom became man, and dwelt among us; and we beheld *its* glory, the glory as of the well-beloved of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Now, in all this quotation, although as we are informed[6] its "sense is approved by Dr. Lardner, Dr. Priestley, Mr. Wakefield, and others," there appears to be only one sentence accurately translated, "the light *shineth in darkness*, and the darkness *comprehended it not*:" of the truth of which, considering it as a prediction, the translation itself, and the approbation of such truly learned men as Lardner, Priestley, and Wakefield, is a most lamentable proof. What a deplorable system of theology must that be, which requires such egregious trifling to support it!

But even this is not the whole of the ridiculous incumbrance that impedes the progress of the theological hypothesis, to which I now advert. It takes for granted, that uninspired men may, at the distance of eighteen hundred years, know more of the "mind of Christ," and of the nature of his religion, than those who saw and conversed with him in "the days of his flesh," and were chosen and inspired to communicate his doctrines, by their preaching and writings, to "the end of

[6] Notes to the New Socinian Version, p. 203.

the world." It, therefore, cherishes a sentiment which is diametrically opposite to that humility and lowliness of mind which is essential to Christianity, and which is possessed by those to whom God has promised to "give *grace*." But, more than all, it makes it the duty of teachers of the Gospel to be ever active in sinking the value, utility, and importance of the Gospel; and diminishing "the riches of Divine mercy." Ambassadors and ministers in general are proud to exalt the power, honour, and dignity of the monarch whom they represent and serve; but, according to the Socinian theory and practice, the chief employment of ministers and "ambassadors of Christ" is to depreciate as far as possible the character of their Lord and King, and to show that he is not entitled to the honour, dignity, majesty, and power, which others usually ascribe to him. One of this class of Gospel ministers, Mr. Belsham, seems by no means persuaded of the purity of the life of Jesus. "Whether (says he) the perfection of Christ's character in public life (as recorded by the evangelists) combined with the general declarations of his freedom from sin, establish, or were intended to establish, the fact, that *Jesus, through the whole course of his* PRIVATE *life, was completely exempt from all the errors and failings of human nature*, is a question of no great intrinsic moment, and concerning which we have no sufficient *data* to lead to a satisfactory answer!!" In another work the same writer affirms that we are *totally* ignorant of the place where Christ resides, and of the occupations in which he is engaged[7]! These are notions which Thomas Paine, with all his hatred to Christianity, would probably have been ashamed to promulgate.

The scheme of theology which includes the Divinity of Jesus Christ as an essential and fundamental part, is free from these puerilities, absurdities, anomalies, and, I could almost say, blasphemies. According to this scheme we believe that Jesus Christ is *a man;* that

[7] Belsham on the Divinity of Christ, p. 190. Belsham's Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Treatise, p. 85.

he is also God; yet we do not believe that the man Jesus is deified. We do not worship the man Jesus; but we believe his own declaration relative to the union of the Divine and human nature in his person, when conversing with Nicodemus, and therefore we *do* worship the God who dwells in the man; for "*in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Deity, bodily;*" and "*through him we have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father*[8]." We do not deny that there is something mysterious in this, for in our present state we do not expect to arrive at the full "knowledge of the *mystery of God*, in which are *hidden* all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge[9]:" nor do we forget that the Scriptures are intended rather to reveal what God is in relation to us[10], than what he is in himself. In our system the difficulty is so transferred, that it lies in the *object*, not in the *terms*; and this is natural, because the object of worship is spiritual and infinite. In metaphysics we have many equal difficulties: and even in the spiritual part of our own nature. Thus, our soul has the three different faculties of understanding, memory, and will, proceeding in succession from each other; yet they are co-existent, and constitute not three souls, but one soul. Indeed, in the usual transactions of life we frequently, nay, commonly, know the *use* of objects, while we continue ignorant of their *nature*; and, in like manner, it will be to our benefit, if we immediately endeavour to experience the use of religious truths, and not wait until we can perfectly comprehend them. According to our system, I say, the *objects* are sublime, the language and expression easy; while, in the sense of those who deny the Divinity of the Messiah, the objects are quite within

[8] See the original of John, iii. 13, where the *ὁ ων εν τῳ ουρανῳ* is peculiarly forcible. See also Col. ii. 9. Eph. ii. 18.

[9] Col. ii. 2, 3.

[10] See Letter IV. p. 61. Let it be remarked, too, that in point of simplicity of explanation, the doctrine of the Divine unity has no advantage over that of the trinity. "That unity, which must be the foundation of all being, is itself of all things the most mysterious and incomprehensible." Read Horsley, p. 287, &c.

the grasp of our comprehension, but the *expression* is obscure: and it is an obscurity which has none of the causes that occasion the obscurity of really difficult passages of Scripture: a circumstance which is very surprising and unaccountable, and sufficient of itself to produce long hesitation in reflecting men before they wander in the labyrinths of Socinianism.

Having premised thus much respecting the different modes of procedure of those who embrace, and those who reject, the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, I shall now direct your attention to a few of the arguments upon which I think this great truth has been irrefragably established.

I. The Divine nature of Jesus Christ was foretold by some of the prophets, either explicitly, when speaking of the Messiah, or by describing works and characteristics of God, which the apostles have declared were referable to Jesus Christ.

Thus, the prophet Isaiah, in a passage where he clearly predicts the coming of the Messiah, describes his person and character in the following terms:

> "Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given;
> And the government shall be upon his shoulder:
> And his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor,
> The *mighty God*, the *Father of the everlasting age*,
> *The Prince of Peace*.
> Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end[11]."

In another portion of his prophecy Isaiah says,

> "*Jehovah God of hosts* shall be
> *A stone of stumbling, and rock of offence*,
> To the two houses of Israel."

The Apostle Peter says, *Jesus Christ* is that "stone of stumbling, and rock of offence[12]."

The same prophet predicts the coming of one who should be the harbinger of God, and cry,

> —— "In the *wilderness* prepare ye the way of JEHOVAH.
> Make straight in the desert a highway for our GOD."

[11] Lowth's Isaiah, ix. 5, 6. [12] Is. viii. 14. 1 Pet. ii. 8.

St. Matthew applies this prediction expressly to *John the Baptist*[13], who was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. But unless Jesus be Jehovah, this prophecy *cannot* apply to John the Baptist.

Isaiah again, in another place, says, in the name of "Jehovah:"

> "Look upon me, and be ye saved, O all ye remote people of the earth.
> For I am GOD, and there is none else.
> To ME shall every knee bow, shall every tongue swear;
> In JEHOVAH shall be justified, and make their boast, all the seed of Israel[14]."

Paul applies this prophecy to Christ, the judge of all: "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to *me*, and every tongue shall confess to God[15]."

The prophet Zechariah, speaking in the name of God, says, "They shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced." An evangelist relates, that "one of the soldiers pierced Jesus's side with a spear .... so that the Scripture was fulfilled .... they shall look on him whom they pierced[16]." Here the prophet foretells that they would pierce *God*: the evangelist says, they pierced *Jesus*; and refers to this circumstance as a completion of the prophecy.

The Royal Psalmist has many distinct predictions respecting the Messiah, which prove his divinity: I shall only select those which were quoted or evidently referred to, by Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews. In the second Psalm, universally allowed to be prophetic of the Messiah, he is declared to be of the same nature with the Father by the language, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Paul quotes this passage to show that Christ is superior to *angels*: "for," says he, "to which of the *angels*

[13] Is. xl. 8. Matt. iii. 1—3. [14] Is. xlv. 22, 23, 25.

[15] Rom. xiv. 11. I may just add that Jer. xxiii. 6, compared with John, xii. 41; Joel, ii. 32, with Rom. x. 13; and Malachi, iii. 1, 2, with the character and office of John the Baptist, furnish irresistible arguments to the same purpose.

[16] Zech. xii. 10. John, xix. 34—37.

said he at any time, Thou art my *Son*, this day have I *begotten* thee[17]?"

In another passage the Psalmist says, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship Him (i. e. Jehovah), all ye gods or angels." Here David describes the Supreme God, and commands the angels to worship *him*. St. Paul quotes the Psalm[18], applies it to Jesus, and commands

[17] Ps. ii. 7. Heb. i. 5.—It is worthy of remark, that the Socinians, in their New Version, evade the force of this passage in a very disingenuous manner, by putting a *false* translation in the text, and the true one in a note. In the text they give—"This day I have *adopted* thee," while in a small note, which not one reader in ten will look at, they say, "begotten thee. Gr. and N." To be sure, it would require a front of brass, to deny that the original *ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε*, is properly translated in the authorized version. Why, then, should *adopted* be thrust into the text, and *begotten* be obscured in a note? Are adoption and begetting synonymous? Or, in such a case as that before us, can one, with any degree of fairness, be substituted for the other? In another passage (John, i. 15) these critics get quit of an equal incumbrance upon their system, by an amazing piece of delicacy: "Only begotten," say they, quoting from Mr. Lindsey's List of *Wrong* Translations, "is most gross and improper language to be used in English, especially with respect to Deity." I would be glad to ask these admirable detectors of "*wrong* translations," by what other English term they will express the true meaning of *μονογενες*, with equal correctness and equal conciseness?

Mr. Belsham, who seems to rely alike upon the ignorance of his admirers and the supineness of those who oppose his dangerous speculations, affirms positively (p. 259 of his book on the Divinity of Christ) that the word *αγαπητος* "*does not occur in St. John*," and that therefore that writer used *μονογενες* to denote *well-beloved*. How will the astonishment and horror of the unlearned reader be excited when I assure him, notwithstanding this bold assertion, that John employs *αγαπητος*, in his Gospel and Epistles, at least *eight times!* Indeed both these words occur in one and the same chapter: see 1 John, iv. 1, 7, 9, 11. Such misrepresentation and evasion, as are glanced at in this note, would be very contemptible even in reasoning upon minor topics; but it is difficult to reconcile them with common integrity or common humanity when they are employed to seduce men into a system in the adoption or rejection of which, for aught these writers can show to the contrary, the salvation of the soul may be deeply implicated.

[18] Psalm xcvii. 7. Heb. i.

the angels to worship HIM. In Paul's estimation, therefore, Jesus is God supreme.

Again, in the hundred and second Psalm, "the afflicted, who poureth out his complaint before *the* LORD," says, "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: *thy* years are throughout all generations. Of old hast THOU *laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of* THY *hands*. They shall perish, &c.—But THOU *art the same, and* THY *years shall have no end*." St. Paul applies this also to Jesus Christ[19], to prove that he was really God, because he made the world.

Once more, in the forty-fifth Psalm, an avowed and very expressive prophecy of the majesty and grace of the Messiah, we have this language: "Thy throne, O GOD, is *for ever and ever*," &c. And this also is cited by Paul, to show that the title of the everlasting God belonged to Christ. "But unto the *Son* he saith, Thy throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom[20]."

The quotations here made, are not from authors

[19] Psalm cii. 24—27. Heb. i. 10—12.

[20] Psalm xlv. 6. Heb. i. 8. Here again the Socinians have been evincing their ingenuity in a remarkable manner. Their translation is, "God is *thy throne* for ever and ever." This appears to approximate more nearly to nonsense than either to pure theology or genuine philosophy; but it serves to exemplify the natural progress of erroneous sentiment. Jesus Christ is not the Son of God really, but by adoption (and adopted not in the opinion of the Apostl Paul, but of modern theologians, who *mistranslate* his language to favour their notions): he discharges his "*office* of Son" so well, that he is to be rewarded by having his Almighty Father transformed into *a chair of state*, on which he is to sit "for ever and ever." Such is the way in which these writers preserve the awful and sublime character of God from degradation. Truly this is a tissue of absurdity very adroitly woven, considering that it is done by those who pride themselves upon their *rationality*, and who are presumptuous enough to accuse the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews of indulging in "far-fetched analogies, and inaccurate reasonings." It ought to be added, to the honour of Dr. Carpenter, that after he had selected "God is thy throne" as one of the most important *improved* renderings, he admit-

who are careless in the employment and selection of their language, nor from those who were deficient in jealousy for the honour of God. On the contrary, they would not suffer the character of God to be depreciated, nor would they permit that of man to be unduly exalted, or in any way to usurp the place of God. "Surely," says one of them, "men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie. *Power* belongeth unto God. Trust in HIM at all times[21]." Another says, "Cease ye from *man;* wherein is he to be accounted of[22]?" Another has this strong denunciation,—"Cursed be the man that trusteth *in man,* and maketh flesh his arm[23]." Yet, when speaking of Jesus Christ, their language is, "Embrace the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: *blessed are all they that put their trust in* HIM[24]." If any words can communicate definite ideas, the grand truth, conveyed by the preceding passages, is that, in the estimation of the apostles, the Messiah possesses the Divine nature and attributes, and is therefore entitled to confidence and worship as GOD.

Men, therefore, who dislike the great peculiarities of the Christian system, may exercise their ingenuity to the utmost, may labour to render some books of Holy Writ suspected, and may speculate on the extent of apostolic inspiration, as much and as long as they please; yet they cannot shake the certainty of these two truths: 1st, That the apostles have applied to

ted in his "Letters to Mr. Veysie," that the idiom of the Greek *forbids* our so rendering it.

The modern Socinians are not the first who have misinterpreted the language of the forty-fifth Psalm to suit an erroneous hypothesis. The *Jews* in the earlier times of Christianity did the same; and Origen (Cont. Celsus, lib. i. cap. 45) shows how he baffled a Jewish doctor, and exposed the evasions by which he aimed to escape the only true deduction, in reference to the essential Deity of the Messiah, which could be made from that graphic prediction.

[21] Ps. lxii. 8, 9, 11. [22] Is. ii. 22.

[23] Jer. xvii. 5. [24] Ps. ii. 12.

Jesus Christ certain passages from the prophets which characterize the supreme God. And 2dly, That if Jesus Christ does not partake of the glories of the Divine essence, and is but a mere creature (to whom consequently those characters do not belong), we must look upon the apostles, not as teachers of truth, but as men who betray others into idolatry by most impious and blasphemous applications of the prophetical books. Nay, we may add farther, that if the notions of the modern Socinians as to the nature of Christ be correct, it follows, inevitably, that neither the prophets exactly predicted things to come, nor the apostles understood the prophets; a consequence which would sap the foundation of both the Jewish and Christian religions, and leave no manner of harmony between the Old and the New Testament. This is a powerful consideration; to which, however, others may be added equally pressing.

II. The prophecies, miracles, language, and conduct of Jesus Christ, furnish indubitable proofs of his Divinity.

The Jewish prophets, when about to announce future things, waited till something extraneous roused within them the prophetic spirit, and then plainly indicated that they were animated by a foreign impulse. Not so the Messiah. He prophesied with the same ease, calmness, and composure, as he spoke: the future mysteries and events which he predicted were not suddenly infused into *his* mind; they were familiar objects to him, always present to his view, their images always (if I may so say) existing within himself; all ages to come were prefigured clearly in his capacious intellect. So that, whether he foretold his own sufferings and death, the destruction of the temple, the resurrection of the dead, or the awful solemnities of the day of judgment, he manifested the same undisturbed tranquillity.

Thus again, with regard to his miracles, such was his "mighty power," that they bore no marks of *de-*

pendance. He stilled the raging of the sea, without any effort. He raised the dead with as great ease as he performed the most common actions. A simple and gentle command caused tempests to cease, and the dead to come forth from their graves: and instead of guarding the bystanders against forming too high conceptions of him on these accounts, he informed them, that whatever wonder was effected by his Father on earth, he likewise performed; and that his Father's works were *his*. Was this the conduct of a *true* prophet, if he had been only a prophet?

Under the old dispensation, it sometimes pleased God to permit his glory and his power to shine forth in his servants. Thus Enoch was translated to heaven, Elijah was conveyed thither in a fiery chariot, John the Baptist was foretold as the harbinger of God. Yet these were individual circumstances. But in Jesus Christ we have an assemblage of wonders. In him all the different characteristics of a Divine mission, dispersed amongst the extraordinary men who had formerly been messengers of the Most High, are collected; and in a manner infinitely more glorious and Divine. He prophesies, but with far more minuteness and sublimity than John the Baptist[25]; nay, he penetrates into the future with more accuracy and clearness than any of the prophets: he appears transfigured on Mount Tabor, and surrounded with more glory than Moses: he ascends to heaven, but with more marks of power and majesty than Elijah: he reproves "wickedness in high places," and purifies the temple with an unresisted energy, assuming the authority of "the Lord of that temple." And on all occasions his language comports with his dignity.

Jesus Christ, we find, is continually representing himself as equal to his Father. "I and my Father,"

[25] For a summary of the distinct particulars, exceeding twenty, in our Lord's prophecies, see Talbot's Analysis of the Holy Bible, book ii. ch. 4. And for a history of the verification of several of them, see Horne's Introduction, Sup. 1st edit. pp. 182—204.

says he, "are one." He acquaints us that he hath come down from heaven, and that he hath quitted the bosom of God; that he was before Abraham; that he was before all things; that eternal life consists in the knowledge of the Son as well as in the knowledge of the Father; that it is not a servant, but a *Son*, that abideth ever[26]; that if the Son make his people free, then shall they be free indeed. Did any *prophets* assume such strange and authoritative language, and, instead of rendering glory to God as the author of every good and perfect gift, attribute to their own efficiency the great things which God performed through their instrumentality? On one occasion, indeed, and but one, I believe[27], Jesus says, that the Father is greater than he. But what a singular acknowledgment is that, if he be not "God manifested in the flesh?" Should we not consider as idiotic, or insane, any mere man who should tell us seriously, that the Supreme Being is greater than he?

The texts, also, in which our Lord asserts his pre-existence, connected with those in which he affirms his equality with his Father, furnish cogent evidence in favour of his true Divinity. This consequence is attempted to be weakened by a perfectly gratuitous hypothesis, namely, that he was taken up to heaven for a short time to receive his instruction. Now here it is obvious to remark, that if it be true that Jesus Christ *went up* into heaven, and came down from heaven a little afterwards, it was incomparably more necessary (to prevent our adoption of erroneous opinions) to mention his *ascent* than his *descent;* yet the Scripture speaks frequently of the latter, never of the former. On this point allow me to lay before you Dr. Abbadie's plain and unforced illustration. Suppose we met with a stranger who should talk to us after this manner:— "I came from *China;* I go to *China.* Ye shall soon see me return where I was before. I departed from *China* and landed in this country; not to do my own

[26] John viii. 35, 42, 58, &c.; x. 30. [27] John, xvi. 28.

business, but that of the *Emperor of China.* I came to do the will of my Father, even the Emperor of China: He is *my own Father*[28]; and no man (here) knoweth my Father but the Son, and they to whom the Son hath revealed him. Lo, I leave this country and go to the Emperor of China, for he sent me. Now that I am to return thither, what is it but that I was sent into this country? He that is of this country speaketh as the men of this country; but he that has come from *China* speaketh as one that came from China. In a little while longer ye shall not see me, because I return to my Father." Now what is the natural impression which such language is calculated to make? Is it, that this man was a mere European, who had spent a few weeks in China, and had caught a glimpse of the Emperor? Or that he was really a native of China, who expected soon to return thither; and had peculiar reasons for wishing to return, that he might receive the honour due to him as the son of the Emperor? It would be an insult to your understanding to make the application, to the uniform conduct and repeated declarations of our Lord.

Such conduct and such declarations were calculated to excite homage and worship; and how did Jesus Christ receive it? Paul and Barnabas, you will recollect, rent their garments when they were taken for gods, and restrained the people who wished to worship them. Peter, also, when the devout Cornelius "fell down at his feet and worshiped him," forbade him, saying, "Stand up; I myself also am *a man*[29]." In

[28] Vide John, v. 18. Πατερα ιδιον, his *own* or *proper* father, and Rom. viii. 32, ιδιου υιου, his *own* or *proper* son.

[29] Acts, xiv. 11—18; x. 25, 26. From this example it is plain that the distinction between *supreme* and *subordinate* worship, upon which so much stress has been recently laid, was unknown to the apostles of our Lord. For it is evident, from the story, that Cornelius did not worship Peter, as God, but as the *messenger of God:* and it is farther evident that Peter thought all external worship, even such as could in no sense be conceived to tend towards a Supreme Object, when paid to *a creature*, a *man*, however dignified by *office*, did infinitely prejudice the glory of the Creator.

the same spirit the angel in the Apocalypse, when St. John prostrated himself to worship him, rejected the homage with horror, saying, "See thou do it not; I am a fellow-servant with thee, and with thy brethren who bear testimony to Jesus: *worship* GOD[30]." But Jesus Christ tranquilly suffered Divine honours to be rendered to him; commended the faith of the disciples who worshiped him, and who with Thomas called him their "Lord and their God;" upbraided this Thomas with his *unbelief*, yet suffered his *idolatry* to pass unreproved; and even confuted those enemies who contested his own Deity and celestial origin. Was this the way to prove that he was nothing more than man?

Ubiquity belongs to none but God; yet Jesus Christ made promises which it was impossible to fulfil without this perfection. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there AM I in the midst of them." "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and *we* will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world[31]." When Nathanael went to him to ascertain if any "good thing could come out of Nazareth," Jesus at once described his

[30] Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 9.

[31] Compare Matt. xviii. 20. John xiv. 23. Matt. xxviii. 20, with Exod. iii. 12; xx. 24. Josh. i. 5, and Jer. i. 6—8. The Socinian translators say the promises in the Gospel "are to be understood as limited to the apostolic age, and perhaps to the apostles themselves." How did the Messiah acquire this temporary omnipresence (say for seventy years), to whom did he resign it, and what notices have we in Scripture of any such resignation? That is, what passages are to be found in Holy Writ which contradict the express declaration in Hebrews, xiii. 8, that "*Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever?*" Besides, let it be considered that omnipresence is an *infinite* attribute, and then two things will follow: First, it can never be communicated to a creature, because in that case it would be both finite and not finite; which is a palpable contradiction. Secondly, Since there can be no intermission of an infinite attribute, if our Lord possessed this omnipresence in the apostolic age (which these gentlemen do not deny), he *must* be omnipresent in all ages. The reasonings which would set aside the declarations of omnipresence in Matthew would just as effectually invalidate that in Exodus, xx. 24.

character; the language of the astonished Jew was, "Whence knowest thou me?" The reply of Jesus, "Before Philip called thee when thou wast under the fig-tree, *I saw thee*," convinced Nathanael that he was "the *Son of* God," because it evinced his omnipresence. The Messiah, instead of correcting the mistake (which he would naturally have done, had it been one), said, "Because I said unto thee, 'I saw thee under the fig-tree,' believest thou? Thou shalt see *greater things* than these[32]:" and doubtless he did: he might witness many more circumstances that showed how Jesus "knew even the thoughts of man[33];" and might hear him authoritatively pronounce the forgiveness of sins, though "none can forgive sins, but God only[34]."

Indeed, the single circumstance of his never undeceiving the Jews, who thought that by "calling himself the Son of God he made himself *equal* with God," is sufficient, with inquirers of unbiased minds, to set the question at rest. This was the cause, at least the ostensive cause, of all the maltreatment he experienced. It was for this he was apprehended, and tried as a blasphemer. The high priest adjured him most solemnly "by the living God, that he would tell them whether he was *the Christ, the Son of God*[35];" clearly showing, on the one hand, that in the expectation of the Jews the Messiah was to possess Divine attributes; and, on the other, that none but a Divine Messiah could without blasphemy assume the title of "the Son of God." If these were mistakes, why did not Jesus seize this opportunity of correcting them, especially when by so doing he would probably have avoided crucifixion? but, instead of this, he persisted in what the high priest, as well as the other Jews, deemed blasphemy[36]; was therefore thought deserving of death, and suffered in consequence. It is admitted by all *Christians* (and as

[32] John, i. 48—51.
[33] Matt. xii. 25. Luke, vi. 8. John, ii. 24, 25; vi. 64.
[34] Mark, ii. 7—11. [35] Matt. xxvi. 63.
[36] Matt. xxvi. 65.

far as I know by all unbelievers), that he suffered *unjustly:* yet how could this be, if he were not what he professed himself to be, "the Son of God," equal to his Father, and "possessing glory with him before the world existed[37]?" If he were a mere man, his life was a life of imposture; during his whole ministry he usurped honours to which he was not entitled; he died as an impostor, and kept up the delusion to the last by even deceiving a fellow-malefactor, who called him "Lord," and heaven his "kingdom," with vain promises of future happiness[38], which he had no power to confer.

In opposition to this induction of particulars there cannot, as I conceive, be more than one argument set up, with any semblance of reason. It may be said, if Jesus Christ were really Divine, why did he not give such palpable evidences of it as could be neither doubted nor disputed? The answer is obvious. Had he furnished convincing proofs of his Godhead, they would not have been verbal declarations, but real exhibitions of his majesty and unlimited power; these would of course have restrained the Jews from putting him to death, agreeably to the assertion of Paul, "Had the princes of this world known, they would not have crucified *the Lord of Glory*[39];" and in that case the principal object for which he visited this world, that of "taking away sin by the sacrifice of himself," would have been defeated.

I have just said there cannot be more than *one* opposing argument set up with any semblance of reason, for an argument of which Socinians are very fond, namely, that because a doctrine is "not revealed in the Gospels it is not true," is not only inapplicable to the present question, but is as trifling and childish as can well be conceived. For what does it amount to? Just

[37] John, xvii. 5. [38] Luke xxii. 43.
[39] 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8. See also, to this effect, the striking language of our Lord in Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.

this: If a proposition is not to be found in a certain assigned portion of Scripture, it is not divinely revealed in any other part of Scripture! How logically conclusive! Must every proposition of revealed truth be condensed into every portion of Holy Writ? Jesus Christ is no where, I think, in the four Gospels, called *a High priest:* will these gentlemen therefore affirm, that he is not "a High priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec?" Nor, as far as I recollect, is he any where in those Gospels denominated *a mediator:* will they, therefore, deny that "there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus?" Most of them admit his mediation; though for one allusion to that, in the New Testament, there will be found at least twenty to his Divinity.

III. The testimony of the apostles is decidedly in favour of the Divinity of our Lord.

Stephen, an apostle, and the first martyr, when dying, invokes the "Lord Jesus to receive his spirit." The apostles in general perform their miracles not in the name of Jehovah, but in that of "Jesus of Nazareth:" and they uniformly ascribe to him the epithets, the attributes, and the works which are peculiar to Deity. They tell us that, conformable to prophecy, "his name is Emmanuel, GOD *with us*[40]." Moreover John turned "many to the *Lord their God*[41]." "Christ is *Lord of all*[42]." "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of *Christ;* and every one give an account of himself to GOD[43]." "The second man is *the Lord from heaven*[44]." "In him dwelleth all the *fulness of the Deity* bodily; and he is the *head of all principality and power*[45]." Jesus Christ is "*Lord of Glory.*" "*For by him* ALL

[40] Matt. i. 23. [41] Luke, i. 16, 76. [42] Acts, x. 36.
[43] Rom. xiv. 10, 12. [44] 1 Cor. xv. 47.
[45] Col. ii. 9, 10. See also the initial salutation in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, "Paul, an apostle (or *one sent*) not from man, nor by *man*, but *by Jesus Christ.*" And let it be farther recollected that the apostles usually mention Jesus Christ by the title of Κυριος "the Lord," the very word which in the Septuagint (from which they quoted) is employed as equivalent to *Jehovah.* This title Zanchie

THINGS WERE CREATED,* that are in heaven and that are on earth, *visible and invisible;* whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; *all things were created by him,* and for him; and he is *before all things,* and by him all things subsist[46]." He is "the first and the last, and he that *lived and became dead,* and *lives for ever and ever,* and has *the keys of death and hades*[47]." "The Lamb is *Lord of lords, and King of kings,*" a peculiar title of Jehovah[48]. He "*searcheth the reins and the hearts,* and will give to every one according to his works[49]." He "*knows the works*" and conduct of all churches[50]. "He promises to bestow upon his people *eternal life*[51]:" while he will "consume the unrighteous *with the breath of his mouth*[52]." And he was the Logos or word of God, who was made "flesh, and dwelt among us," and of whom John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with God,* and the Word *was* GOD; all things were made by Him, and without him was not a *single thing* made that was made[53]."

assures us is, "in the writings of the apostles, simply and absolutely ascribed to Christ, at least *a thousand times,*" and generally so as to import *necessary existence.*

[46] 1 Cor. ii. 8. James, ii. 1. Col. i. 16, 17.

[47] Rev. i. 17, 18.

[48] Rev. xvii. 14. Deut. x. 17. 1 Tim. vi. 15.

[49] Rev. ii. 2.

[50] Rev. ii. 2, 9, 13, 19; iii. 8, 15.

[51] John, x. 28.

[52] 2 Thes. ii. 8.

[53] John, i. 1, 3, 14. Consult also Eph. v. 5. 1 Thes. iv. 14. 2 Thes. i. 12. 1 Tim. v. 21. Tit. ii. 13. 2 Pet. i. 1; and Jude; applying to most of them in the original the established doctrine of the Greek article. To diminish the force of these proofs from the language of the apostles, I have been reminded that in the Acts of the Apostles, if not in their Epistles, they usually call Jesus Christ *a man;* and farther, that they usually in argumentation speak of him as a man; whence it is inferred that they knew not that he was Divine, but acknowledged that he was a man. Here, it is obvious to reply, as Dr. Horsley has long ago done, that "according to the faith which I defend, Christ is truly a man as well as GOD. It is no wonder, therefore, that he should be mentioned as a man, when nothing in the narrative, or in the argument, requires that his Divinity should be particularly brought to view. To the first argument in particular, it

Quotations tending to establish the same point might be extended almost indefinitely; but if the real object of inquiry be to arrive at truth, the preceding will be quite sufficient. Here again, indeed, the merits of the question might be very safely made to turn upon the text last cited. For, taking Λογος (a word not borrowed from the writings of Plato or of Philo, as some pretend, but from the Jewish Scriptures[54]), to signify, as it doubtless does in this passage, the divine and substantial *Word of God, the* MESSIAH, we are hence assured, 1st, That he was in the beginning; that is, that he already was and did exist when things began to be created. 2dly, That in that state of his existence, before the creation of the world, he was partaker of the Divine glory and happiness. 3dly, That he *was God* by participation of the Divine nature with the Father. 4thly, That *not a single being* (ουδε εν) was made without him: he made all creatures without exception; and consequently *he* is not a creature[55].

is a farther answer, that it was the style of all the sacred writers, and it is the style of all writers, to name things rather after their *appearances* than their internal forms. The tempter, you know, in the Mosaic history of the fall, is called the serpent; and is not once mentioned by any other name. The three angels, who appeared to Abraham in the form of men, are called men, throughout the story. To the second argument in particular, it is a farther answer, that, as the scheme of man's redemption required the incarnation of the Son of God, the apostles would often find it necessary, in reasoning upon that scheme, and in argumentation in defence of it, to insist on his humanity." See also Abbadie on the Divinity, sect. vi. chap. 3, &c.

54 Parkhurst's Greek Lexicon. Λογος, xvi.

55 The followers of Socinus are frequently introducing new translations and new interpretations of this passage: but if we allow them to be received, we must also admit *two* very extraordinary and almost incredible things, namely, that Ignatius and others who lived very near John's time, and were therefore most likely to know his meaning, should so widely mistake it; and that all Christians (or at least the great body) should err so extremely in an important article of faith for almost one thousand six hundred years, that no man understood this text rightly before Socinus. This latter consideration would be enough of itself to startle any modest man: but Socinus seems more inclined to boast of it; for, when speaking of this very

In estimating the force of these texts, let it be considered that they are selected from the writings of men whose great business was to destroy *idolatry*, and implant the true worship of God upon its ruins; and that it was foretold their description of "the way, the truth, and the life[56]," should be so obvious that "the wayfaring men, though fools, should not err therein[57]." If Jesus Christ were a mere man, the predictions of the prophets are in this respect, again, not accomplished, and we are yet left to wander without any infallible guide; for on that supposition, the Bible, instead of being so plain and perspicuous "that he who runs may read" and understand it, if he read with singleness of heart, is the most obscure and delusive book in the world: and the Christian dispensation, instead of having eradicated idolatry, has given birth to an idolatry, more refined, it is true, but at the same time more prevalent, more formed for universality and permanence, than any idolatry that ever before existed[58]."

verse, he says, "Quorum verus, sensus omnes prorsus, qui quidem extarent, explanatores latuisse videtur."

Another text equally decisive with the above, and which also the rejectors of the Divinity of Christ have endeavoured to weaken by a most extraordinary construction, is Phil. ii. 5—10. For a very masterly refutation of their strained interpretation, see "*Abbadie on the Divinity of Jesus Christ*," sect. iii. chap. 7. This book, which I never saw till just as my third edition was passing through the press, I beg to recommend most cordially, as, on the whole, the most valuable and invulnerable work on the subject I have read.

[56] John, xiv. 6. [57] Is. xxxv. 8.

[58] Being obliged to regard brevity, I have omitted all those reasonings in favour of the Divinity of our Lord, which are deduced from his miraculous conception. To such as wish to consider this branch of the argument, I would beg to recommend the striking passage from Cassian, quoted by Hooker in § 32 of his Discourse on Justification, Archbishop Tillotson's 45th and 46th Sermons, a very able pamphlet entitled "Jesus of Nazareth *the Son of God*," by Mr. R. Alliot of Nottingham, and Bishop Horsley's "Sermon on the Incarnation," published in his most interesting and decisive volume of "Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley." *The doctrine of the miraculous* conception was asserted and defended by Justin Martyr. See his 2d Apol. § 28, 30, 41, 43.

There is another class of texts which become divested of all their propriety and importance, and sink into mere trifling, if the Divinity of Jesus Christ be denied: I mean those which represent to us in such glowing terms the love and condescension of the Redeemer. If Christ were in the "form of God, equal with God, and very God;" then it was an act of infinite love and condescension in him to become *man* and die for us. But if he were no more than a creature, surely it was no such amazing condescension to undertake so noble and sublime a work as being the Saviour of mankind: a work which would advance him to be Lord and Judge of the world;—cause him to be for ever admired, reverenced, and adored by men and angels,—and highly exalted and glorified by God himself. If the work of redemption was too stupendous for a creature to undertake, the honours of it were too high for a creature to aspire after; then, certainly, the very notion of condescension is merged and lost, upon every hypothesis which does not make Christ truly and properly God, God eternal. In fact, "to become man, to suffer and die for the redemption of the world, and to be made the Lord and Judge both of the quick and of the dead, can be an act of condescending love and goodness only in God. So that *to deny the Divinity of Christ alters the very foundation of Christianity,* and destroys all the powerful arguments of the love, humility, and condescension of our Lord, which are the peculiar motives of the Gospel[59]."

IV. The prevailing opinion among Christians during the first three centuries was, that Jesus Christ was really a Divine Person, and not a mere man.

I assume it here as a position which cannot with any justice be disputed, that the opinions held by the majority of real and pious Christians in the early ages, when, as Jerome finely observes, "the blood of Christ was yet warm in the breasts of Christians, and the faith and spirit of religion were brisk and vigorous," were

[59] Sherlock's Vindication of the Defence of Stillingfleet, p. 268.

those that were taught by the apostles, and constituted the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion. The observable harmony and unanimity of the several churches in their most public acts is a circumstance which irresistibly confirms this position. It is scarcely probable that any large church of those early ages should vary, in things of moment, from the apostolical doctrines: and it is quite absurd to imagine that *all* the churches should combine in the same error, and conspire together to corrupt the doctrine of Christ. This argument is much and justly insisted upon both by Irenæus and Tertullian against the heretics of their respective times [60]. They both affirm that the true disciple (that is, according to their own interpretation, one who believes that He who wrought their salvation upon earth was God) " is a follower of the *public* doctrine of the church."

Now, they are well known facts, that soon after the middle of the first century (that is, about A. D. 60 and 72), Cerinthus and Ebion impugned the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ; that John wrote his Gospel with a view to refute their errors; and that both were condemned for openly impugning this doctrine, by the whole church at that time, and frequently afterwards, *before* the establishment of Christianity by Constantine; this doctrine being then reckoned a fundamental and essential part of the Gospel faith. It is also equally notorious, that Theodotus, Artemon, Berillus, Paul of Samosata, and Arius, did in succession, before the year 320, deny the *proper Divinity* of Jesus Christ in a greater or less degree, making him a *creature;* that they were all in their turns censured by the church : the sentiments of the latter, for example, being strongly censured at the council of Nice, by three hundred and fifteen out of three hundred and eighteen bishops, the wisest, worthiest, and every way most excellent, which the Christian world could then fur-

60 Iren. l. iii. c. 3; l. iv. c. 53—59. Tertul. Præscript. c. 20, 28.

nish[61], called together out of Europe, Asia, and Africa; constituting a free council under no secular influence, or awe of superior human control. Reverting to the first of these deniers of Christ's Divinity, the substance of his opinion was, that Jesus and Christ were two persons: Jesus a mere man, conceived, in the natural way, of Joseph and Mary; Christ a celestial spirit, which descended from above, and resided in the man Jesus, not constantly, but occasionally. Here the proper Divinity of our Lord was denied; and this was condemned, as error and heresy, by the bishops of Asia, and others of Cerinthus's contemporaries, who went in a body to St. John, and importuned him to bear his testimony against these sentiments[62]. Now the only question for consideration relative to Cerinthus is this:—Was he the first who truly understood that doctrine of the new religion which respected the *person* of its founder; or had the great body of the churches which were converted by the apostles received from them the true doctrines, and was Cerinthus the first who had sufficient boldness to promulgate erroneous sentiments? This question admits but of one rational answer; and that will accord with the decision of the primitive Christians against Cerinthus. Similar observations will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to Ebion, and the other heresiarchs down to Arius: I beg to confirm them by a remarkable concession of Mr. Bayle's. He allows that, "in the days of the apostles or their disciples, it had been easy to detect those who gave the Scriptures a wrong interpretation, because the infallibility of the apostles (who might have been consulted by word or letter), and the fresh remembrance of the verbal instructions they had given their disciples and pastors, whom themselves had consecrated, furnished ready means for clearing any doubt, or disputed point[63]."

[61] Euseb. de Vit. Constantin. l. iii. c. 7, 9.

[62] Victorin in Assoc. Bibl. PP. tom. i. p. 576. Hieronym. Prolog. in Matt. p. 3. Opp. tom. iv. Ed. Bened.

[63] Bayle's Sup. to Phil. Comment. p. 692.

It would be easy to cite proofs that the sentiment of *whole churches* in the primitive times agreed, on the subject of Christ's Divinity, with what is now denominated the orthodox doctrine. But I shall select only two. And first let me direct your attention to the epistle written by the church of Smyrna to other churches, in which they describe the sufferings and martyrdom of Polycarp; for there is related this remarkable circumstance: viz. That as soon as Polycarp was dead, the Jews suggested to the heathen judge the expediency of not permitting the Christians to take the martyr's body, "lest they should forsake their crucified master, and begin to worship Polycarp," "not considering (add those early Christians taught by a bishop who was the disciple of St. John) that we can never either forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of all such as shall be saved throughout the whole world, the righteous for the ungodly, *or worship any other*. For him *as the Son of God, we* WORSHIP; but the martyrs we only *love*, as the disciples and followers of our Lord[64]."

To this remarkable testimony allow me to add that of *Caius*, who in his book called "The Labyrinth," written against Artemon, in refutation of the assertion that Artemon's doctrine was coeval with Christianity, points first to the then well-known sentiments of *Justin, Miltiades, Tatian, Clemens, Irenæus, Melito*, in favour of Christ's Divinity, and then asks, "How many Psalms, Hymns, and Canticles were written from the beginning by the brethren, and transcribed by the faithful, in which Christ the Word of God is celebrated for no other than God indeed? And these being adopted in the churches, how is it possible that our ancestors until the time of Victor should have so preached, when the true ecclesiastical sentiment for so many years is certainly known unto all the world? How can they thus shamelessly report of Victor, when they know *for certainty* that Victor excommunicated Theodotus the Tan-

[64] Smyrn. Eccles. Epist. ap. Euseb. lib. iv. cap. 15. Wake's Fathers, p. 150.

ner, who denied the Divinity of Christ, because he was the first who affirmed that Christ was a mere man? If Victor, as they report, had been of their blasphemous opinion, how is it likely that he would have excommunicated Theodotus[65]?"

Having thus shown that in the early ages the denial of Christ's Divinity was condemned as heretical and dangerous, while whole churches avowed the great truth, and formed their prayer and praise accordingly; I shall proceed to inform you what were the sentiments of the chief antenicene Fathers with respect to this important doctrine; that you may know how they, who were doubtless better acquainted with the original language of the New Testament than we are, interpreted it; and may see how completely *their* sentiments accord with those now maintained by a very great proportion of pious men.

I quote first from IGNATIUS, who wrote, at latest, about the year 107. "Be not led aside (says he) by strange doctrines, nor by antiquated tales, which are

[65] Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. cap. 28. In farther describing these early heretics, Caius shows that there was an awful similarity between their practices, and those of many modern rejectors of Christ's Divinity. "They corrupted the Holy Scriptures without any reverence; they rejected the canon of the ancient faith; they remain ignorant of Christ, not searching simply what the Holy Scripture affirms, but exercising themselves and sifting it syllogistically to impugn the Divinity of Christ. So, if any reasoned with them out of Holy Writ, forthwith they demanded whether it were a conjunct or a simple kind of syllogism........They abuse the art of infidels to the establishing their heretical opinion, and corrupt the simplicity of the Scriptures. To prove that I do not affirm this untruly, examine their copies; compare them one with another, and note their contrariety. The books of *Asclepiades* agree not with those of *Theodotus*; nor those of *Hermophilus* with either: nor are the copies of *Apollonius* at concord among themselves.........Either these persons persuade themselves that the Scriptures were not indited by the Holy Spirit, and in that case they are infidels; or else they think themselves *wiser* than the Holy Spirit, thus showing themselves possessed of a devil. Such things they cannot deny, because we possess them in their writings: nor can they show us who instructed *them*, who delivered them *such* Scriptures, or whence they translated *their* copies."

unprofitable. For if we yet live according to Judaism, it is equivalent to declaring that we have not accepted grace; for the most holy prophets lived according to Christ Jesus. And for that cause were they persecuted, being *inspired by the grace of Christ* that the unbelievers might be convinced that there is one God who hath manifested himself by his Son Jesus Christ, who is his *Eternal Word*[66]."

JUSTIN MARTYR has the following passage, preserved by Dr. Grabe: "When man's nature had contracted corruption, it was necessary that he who would save it should do away the principle of corruption. But this could not be done without uniting *essential life* with the nature so corrupted, to do away the corruption, and ever after to immortalize the corrupt nature. Wherefore it was meet that the *Word should become incarnate*, to deliver us from the death of natural corruption[67]."

The same writer, in one of his "Apologies," says, "The pagans tax us with atheism; and we frankly confess the charge, that with respect to the gods in worship among you we *are* atheists. But we are far otherwise in respect of the most true God, the *Father* of righteousness, purity, and every virtue; a God infinitely removed from the least mixture or spot of evil: Him, and his *only begotten* SON, together with the SPIRIT, who spake by the prophets, we worship and adore: and *our* way of worshiping is in spirit and in truth[68]."

IRENÆUS treats very forcibly and fully respecting the Deity of Christ; but I shall only extract two passages. After remarking that the Son of God, and Word of the Father, became man that he might "give salvation to *his own creature*," he proceeds thus: "Therefore, as I

66 Ignat. ad Magnes. s. viii. 67 Grab. Spicileg. vol. ii. p. 17.

68 Just. Apol. ii. § 6. See also Dial. cum Tryp. § 17, and 28, where Justin illustrates the generation of the Son of God, by a reference "to fire, which, without diminution of its substance, kindles another." "God of God, as fire of fire."

said before, he *united man to God*. For if it were not man that should overcome the adversary of man, the enemy would not have been rightly vanquished: and, on the other hand, if it were not God to give the salvation, we could not be firmly possessed of it. Besides, if man had not been united to God, he could never have been partaker of incorruption. So it was necessary that a mediator between God and man should bring both together into amity and concord by his own proximity to both, that so he might present man to God, and notify God to man[69]." The same Father, when speaking of the miracles which were wrought in his time, assures us they were effected "not by enchantments, or by invocation of angels, but by *calling on the name of Jesus Christ*." This, by the way, is farther manifest from the prayer for the Energumens, in the eighth book of the *Apostolical Constitutions*, which is directed personally to Christ under the title of "*the only begotten God*."

ATHENAGORAS, who flourished in the second century, speaks of Christians as "men that made small account of the present life, but were intent only upon contemplating God, and knowing his *Word*, who is from him; what union *the Son has with the Father, what communion the Father has with the Son;* what the Spirit is, and what the union and distinction are of such so united, the Spirit, the Son, and the Father[70]."

TERTULLIAN understood the phrase *Son of God* as applied to Christ to mean the same as *God of God;* as is obvious from many parts of his writings[71]. There is still extant a creed of his, which runs thus: "We believe in one God; but under this dispensation, which

[69] Irenæus, iii. c. 18; l. ii. c. 55. It may not be amiss to add that Irenæus contends, in lib. iv. cap. 52, "that they who make Christ the son of Joseph attain neither remission of sins, nor the adoption of the sons of God, nor so much as the right of a blessed resurrection." This is also testified by Feuardentius.

[70] Athenag. Legat. l. xi. p. 46. Ed. Ox.

[71] See especially Tertul. Apol. c. 21.

we call the economy, that the *one God hath a Son, which is his Word, who proceeded from him, and by whom all things were made.* He was sent from the Father to the Virgin, and was born of her both God and man, *Son of man and Son of God*—who afterwards, according to his promise, sent from the Father the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the Sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This is the rule which has *come down to us from the beginning of the Gospel*[72]. And again, "What is it that the Gospel has done, what is the substance of the New Testament, extending the Law and the Prophets as far as John, if, from thenceforwards, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, are not believed to make one God[73]?"

Origen, also, in his writings against Celsus, furnishes many assertions which are unequivocal and decisive. Thus, he affirms, first, that Christ was the *uncreated* Son of God: secondly, that the Maker of the world is to be worshiped: thirdly, that Christ is the Maker of the world. He maintains a precise distinction between creatures and their Creator; and he brings them together into comparison as to the respect that is due to them. He next says that we ought not to worship any creatures, but only the Creator: that we can only lift up our eyes to the Creator of all the magnificence of nature to see whom we ought to admire, serve, and adore. Then he proclaims Jesus Christ as *the Creator of the Universe;* that God working with him said, at the Creation, "Let there be light; let *us* make man." Nay, he is yet more distinct in the statement of his opinions. He distinguishes between the

72 Tert. adv. Prax. c. 2, p. 5, 6. Welchman Ed.

73 Tert. adv. Prax. c. 31, p. 102. The Collection of Creeds and Doxologies given by Bingham, and indeed many of those that are drawn together by Whiston, furnish ample proof of the early prevalence of this momentous truth. So, again, many of the early hymns. One of these, composed in the second century, has been transferred into the Liturgy of the Church of England. It begins with—"Glory be to God on high!" and occurs just before the benediction in the Communion service.

Divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, and refers the necessity of their union to the required efficacy of the sacrifice or atonement. He says that the Father is indeed eminently God; but that the worship of the Son is not an inferior but a *Divine* worship: he applies the same expression to the adoration of Jesus Christ by the Magi, that he does to the worship of God; he speaks of the Father and the Son being jointly worshiped as one God; he admits the worship of the Son in his distinct individual character; attributing to him immutability, omnipresence, and other qualities whch are characteristic only of the Most High; and calling him the *Eternal World*, the *Son* and *Power* of the *Eternal God*[74].

CYPRIAN, when arguing against the invalidity of heretical baptisms, inquires how the subject of such baptism can become the temple of God, saying, " If he be thereby made the temple of God, I would ask of what Divine person is it? Is it of God the Creator? He could not be so, if he believed not in him. Is it of Christ? Neither can he be his temple, while he denies *Christ to be God!* Is it then of the Holy Spirit? But since the three are one, how can the Holy Spirit have friendship with him that is at enmity with either Father or Son[75]?" This Father abounds with passages in which the Divinity of Christ is asserted.

NOVATIAN expresses himself as follows: " If God the Father save none but through God, then no one can be saved by God the Father, who does not confess that Christ is God; in whom, and by whom, the Father promises to give salvation. Wherefore very justly, whosoever acknowledges him to be God is in the way to be saved by Christ who is God; and whosoever does

[74] See Mr. F. Cunningham's Hulsean Prize Essay on the Books of Origen against Celsus, p. 40, 41. See also for some striking passages, Bull, Defens. Fid. Nicen. sec. ii. cap. 9; to which I may also add here, that even Celsus concedes that the *true Messiah was to be the Son of God.*

[75] Cyprian, Ep. 73 ad Jubaian.

not acknowledge him to be God forfeits salvation, because he *cannot otherwise have it than in Christ as God*[76]."

DIONYSIUS, bishop of Rome, after censuring Marcion's *tritheistic* doctrine as diabolical, says, "Nor are they less to blame, who think *the Son a creature*, and who suppose the Lord to have come into being, as if he were one of the things that were really made[77]."

His cotemporary, DIONYSIUS *of Alexandria* (both flourishing about A. D. 259), expressed himself thus: "The Father being eternal, the Son must be eternal too, Light of Light.—The names mentioned by me are undivided and inseparable: when I named the Father before I mentioned the Son, I signified the Son in the Father. If any of my false accusers suspect that because I called God creator and former of all things, I made him creator of Christ, let him consider that I before styled him *Father*, and so *the Son was included in him*[78]."

The case of this Dionysius of Alexandria evinces very plainly of what great moment the belief of Christ's Divinity was reckoned in the middle of the third century. In controversy with the Sabellians, he expressed himself rather unwarily, and thence became suspected of leaning too far towards the opposite extreme, and of holding inadequate notions of the Deity of Christ. Such was the jealousy with which this doctrine was guarded, that the whole Christian world were thrown into alarm on account of the supposed heresy of so eminent a man as this Dionysius. Complaint was brought from Egypt as far as Italy: and though the Bishop of Rome had not at that time any authority over the Bishop of Alexandria, the aged prelate of the latter place made known to the whole world, through the medium of the Bishop of Rome, that he never intended "the least injury to the Divinity of Christ, or

[76] Novat. c. 12, p. 36.
[77] Apud Athanas. vol. i. p. 231.
[78] Dionys. Alex. apud Athanas. de Sententia Dionysii, p. 254.

to his consubstantiality; but himself believed them, as sincerely and fully as any other man could[79]."

That these were not the sentiments of a few individuals, but of the great body of the Christian church in the primitive ages, is evident both from the remarks which precede these quotations, and from the testimony of cotemporary heathen authors[80]. In a former letter I laid before you two frequently cited passages from Lucian and Pliny[81]; from which it appears that the grand crime of the first Christians consisted in singing "hymns to Christ as *unto a God.*" It was for their obstinate adherence to this idolatrous worship, as the heathens deemed it, that they were persecuted and brought to martyrdom. Now if this were a calumny, which, if they had not rendered Divine honours to Jesus Christ, it must have been, they would not have rested quietly under it, especially when its consequences were so dreadful. They would have reiterated again and again, "We do not *worship* Jesus Christ, as you suppose: we celebrate his memory and his virtues, it is true; but we consider him as merely a creature, and therefore never transfer to him the worship due to God alone." The admirable apologists of Christianity, in the early ages, eagerly seized and refuted every the slightest calumny: yet upon this momentous point, in which, if Jesus Christ had not been God, their conduct

[79] See Waterland on the Trinity, p. 352, Ed. 1800. Consult also (since I have been obliged to omit many quotations from Barnabas, Polycarp, Theophilus, Clemens Alexandrinus, &c.) for a more full account of the opinions of the Christians of the first three centuries respecting the Divinity of Christ, Abp. Wake's "Apostolical Fathers;" Mr. Bingham's Origines Ecclesiasticæ, book x. ch. 4, and book xiii. ch. 2; Bishop Horsley's "Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley, upon the Historical Question of the Belief of the First Ages in our Lord's Divinity," and Mr. Badcock's deservedly celebrated articles in confutation of Dr. Priestley, in the Monthly Review for 1783.

[80] I might adduce the authority of Socinus himself, who assured his disciples that to *worship Christ* was the ancient and *universal* practice of saints and martyrs. Ad Matt. Radec. Epist. 3, p. 391.

[81] See Letter IX.

would have been most odious and censurable, they attempted no defence. They, who could not be persuaded to bend to the statue of the Cæsars, justified by their silence the accusation of adoring a crucified malefactor. They would not offer incense to idols, but affirmed that "whatever was exalted above the standard of civil worship (or respect) in imitation of the Divine excellency was directly made an idol[82];" yet they worshiped one who had died ignominiously; and, confiding in strength which *he* would impart to them, despised the malice of their enemies, and the wrath of emperors, and cheerfully submitted to the most agonizing sufferings, terminated only by death, rather than attempt to wipe off the reproach of adoring the "malefactor Jesus." Admit that Jesus is "the Christ the son of God," that though "dead he is alive for evermore," and that he is still "head over all things to the church," "dwelling in all hearts by faith," and enabling his faithful disciples "in all things to be *more* than conquerors through him that loved them[83]," and the conduct of the martyrs of the primitive times is intelligible and defensible: deny it, and you reduce them to a level with idiots; and have moreover to account for the remarkable phenomenon of a church whose foundations were laid in error, which was supported by enthusiasm and folly, but opposed by learning, philosophy, and the strongest secular power, being "built up" notwithstanding, and becoming the "joy and rejoicing of the whole earth."

Here, then, I beg to close the evidence, not because there is not more to produce, but because I regard the producing of more as totally unnecessary. The Jewish prophets foretold that the Messiah would be "the Mighty God," "God with us,"—John the precursor of Jesus was the harbinger "of the Most High,"—Jesus Christ himself asserted his equality with the Father,—his apostles ascribed to him the works and

[82] Vide Tert. de Idol. c. 15. Greg. Naz. Or. 38, in Nat. Chris.
[83] Rom. viii. 35, 37.

attributes of Deity,—the great body of professing Christians in the first three centuries lived and died in the persuasion that he was "one with God,"—the primitive martyrs resigned their lives in attestation of this great truth, and while they suffered "rejoiced in *God their Saviour;*" and they derived their conviction from the personal instruction of the apostles, or from the perusal of the word of God. On these grounds we affirm that the doctrine is *true*. If it were not, it would follow that the most diligent perusers of that book which is given to be "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths[84]," have lost the truth, while Mahometans, who do not read the Bible, have found it: for if Jesus Christ be not God, *Mahomet* has described his character more correctly than the apostles. This is his language: "They are infidels who declare that God is Christ: Christ the son of Mary is no more than God's envoy. Christians say Christ is the son of God; how are they infatuated: far be it from God that he should have *a Son*. Jesus is no other than a *servant*. O Jesus, son of Mary, dost thou persuade mankind to put thee in the place of God[85]?" And truly, if he have so done, and be not essentially God, it *must* follow (though it is a horrid inference) that Mahomet, even Mahomet the impostor, was more faithful, more wise, and more zealous for God's glory than was Jesus Christ himself!!

I cannot, however, pass from the subject before us without entreating you to bear in mind that it is, strictly speaking, *fundamental*. Different religions are (as was suggested in a preceding letter) distinguished one from another by their having different objects of worship, and proposing different grounds of hope. Considered in this light, the religion of him who admits and him who rejects the Deity of Christ, are as essentially different as the religions of the Jew and the Christian. This is no uncandid remark; but one founded in the nature of things, and justified by the conduct of both parties. If Jesus Christ be a mere

84 Ps. cxix. 105. 85 Sale's Koran, passim.

man, those who worship him are guilty of idolatry: in that case the Socinians rightly call them *idolaters*, and, for aught I can see to the contrary, were justifiable upon their own principles in proposing (as they did in the reign of Charles the Second[86]) to reduce the two schemes of Socinianism and Mahometanism into one consistent aggregate. If, on the other hand, Jesus Christ be God incarnate, then " every spirit that con-

[86] I have been called upon to furnish proofs of this singular fact, and feel no hesitation in complying with the requisition.

A negotiation was opened on the part of our English Unitarians, with his Excellency Ameth Ben Ameth, Ambassador of the Emperor of Morocco at the English Court, in order to form an alliance with the Mahometan Prince, for the more effectual propagation of the Unitarian principles.

The two Unitarian divines, who undertook this singular treaty, address the Ambassador, and the Mussulmen of his suite, as " votaries and fellow-worshippers of the sole Supreme Deity." They *return thanks to God* that he hath preserved the Emperor of Morocco, and his subjects, *in the excellent knowledge of one only Sovereign God*, who hath no distinction, nor plurality of persons, and in many other *wholesome* doctrines.

They say, that they with their pens *defend the faith of one Supreme God:* and that God raised up *Mahomet to do the same with the sword, as a scourge on idolizing Christians.* They therefore style themselves *the fellow-champions with the Mahometans for these truths.* They offer their assistance to purge the Koran of certain corruptions and interpolations, which after the death of Mahomet had crept into his papers, of which the Koran was composed. For *of Mahomet they think too highly*, to suppose that he could be guilty of the many repugnances, which are to be found in the writings that go under his name. This work they declare themselves willing to undertake, *for the vindication of Mahomet's glory.* They intimate that the corrections which they would propose would render the Koran more consistent; not with itself only, but with the Gospel of Christ, of which they say Mahomet pretended to be but a preacher. They tell the Ambassador, that the Unitarian Christians form a great and considerable people. To give weight to the assertion, they enumerate the heresiarchs of all ages *who have opposed the Trinity*, from Paulus Samosatenis, down to Faustus Socinus, and the leaders of the Polonian fraternity. They celebrate the modern tribes of Arians, as assertors of the proper unity of God; and they close the honourable list with *the Mahometans themselves.* All these, they say, *maintain the faith of one God:* and " why should we forget to add *you, Mahometans*, who also consent with us in the belief of one only Supreme Deity?"

fesseth that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh*, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh*, is not of God:" "whosoever denieth the Son hath *not* the Father," while he "that acknowledgeth the Son *hath the Father also*:" "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that *hath not the Son hath not life*[87];" they are as opposite in their nature as the dead and the living, and it is as impossible for them to

Such is the substance of a letter which they presented to the Ambassador with some Latin manuscripts respecting the differences between Christianity and the Mahometan religion, and containing an ample detail of the Unitarian tenets. They apply to the Mussulman, as *to a person of known discernment in spiritual and sublime matters:* and they entreat him to communicate the import of their manuscripts to the consideration of the fittest persons among his countrymen.

This singular epistle may be seen entire in Leslie's *Socinian Controversy discussed.*

Dr. Horsley, in whose controversial writings with Dr. Priestley this is inserted (Letter 16, page 307, ed. 3), by way of stamping its authenticity, has added a note, in which he says that, in consequence of Dr. Priestley's questioning the veracity of it, he examined the Archbishop's library at Lambeth, from whence the copy was originally taken, where he found it in a thin folio, under the mark 673, among the *Codices MSS. Tenisoniani*; and entered in the catalogue, under the article *Socinians*, by the title of *Systema Theologiæ Socinianæ.*

On the preceding leaf are these remarks:—"These are the original papers which a cabal of Socinians in London offered to present to the Ambassador of the King of Fez and Morocco, when he was taking leave of England, August, 1682.—The said Ambassador refused to receive them, after having understood that they concerned religion.—The agent of the Socinians was Monsieur Virzè.—Sir Charles Cottrell, Knt. Master of the Ceremonies, then present, desired he might have them, which was granted; and he brought them, and gave them to me, Thomas Tenison, then Vicar of St. Martin's in the Fields, Middlesex."

Dr. Horsley adds, by way of farther confirmation, "I do most solemnly aver that I have this day (Jan. 15, 1789) compared the letter to Ameth Ben Ameth, as published by Dr. Leslie, in his Socinian Controversy discussed, with the MS. in the Archbishop's library, and find that the printed copy, with the exception of some trivial typographical errors, which in no way affect the sense, and are such as any reader will discover and correct for himself, is exactly conformable to the MS., without the omission or addition of a single word."

[87] 1 John, iv. 2, 3; ii. 23; v. 12. In the first of these passages, the phrase *in the flesh* either clearly indicates a possibility or capa-

unite cordially together in religious worship. The one party contends, and contends naturally, that by worshiping a *creature* he should dishonour God, to whom alone worship is due: the other affirms as naturally, and (as I trust you will now allow) more consistently with the uniform tenour of the Gospel, that, by withholding worship from the Saviour, he should deny his Divine perfections, dishonour and degrade Him, and thus lose his title to eternal glory.

The character the Redeemer *now* sustains renders this a matter of infinite moment. Jesus *has* "ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of his Father," "far above all principalities and powers." Here he was our *prophet* and teacher, and died as our atoning sacrifice; there he is incessantly pleading for his people; nay, there he both intercedes as our *High Priest*, and sits and reigns as *King;* reigns with inexpressible dignity and glory, rich in power and grandeur, rich in compassion and tenderness, rich in adorable perfections, as the SON OF GOD, the SAVIOUR to the uttermost, the PRINCE OF LIFE. He governs all things in heaven and on earth, that he may defend his Church, adorn her with his Spirit, and procure and accomplish her eternal salvation. But "from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:" "for the Father judgeth no man; but hath given all judgment to his Son, that all may *honour the Son* AS *they honour the Father*[88]." May the contemplation of this great event stimulate us, my friend, sedulously to seek, and heartily to embrace, the truth. For, "behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him[89]." Then will *they* "say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from

bility of other ways of coming, or it is nugatory. If it be not merely expletive, which is not easily to be admitted, it is, therefore, *decisively* in favour of the orthodox doctrine respecting the person of Christ. The Socinian interpretation of the passage is refuted by Bishop Horsley, Letters, p. 120, and by Abbadie, sect. iii. cap. 2, 10.

[88] John, v. 22, 23. [89] Rev. i. 7.

the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, even from the *wrath of the Lamb;* for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand[90]?" while the meek and humble and upright followers of Jesus, rejoicing that at length "they are indeed becoming like him, for they see him as he is," will exclaim in grateful triumph, "Lo, this is OUR GOD; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is THE LORD, we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation[91]!"

LETTER XVI.

On the Nature of Conversion, and its Necessity.

THE subject which I have selected for discussion in the present letter is one of the highest moment, and yet, unfortunately, is one, respecting which the greatest and most lamentable mistakes have prevailed. Some have imagined that religious conversion, or regeneration, is effected by baptism; so that whoever is baptized is, of necessity, regenerated. This, however, is neither consistent with Scripture nor with fact, except in those very rare instances in which the "baptism with water," and that "with the Holy Spirit," occur at the same moment. Gibbon and Hume were baptized in their infancy, but lived and died infidels: Simon Magus was baptized, but certainly not regenerated, for he was subsequently declared by an apostle to be "in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity:" and you and I have known some who, though they were baptized when adults, on a profession of faith, afterwards relapsed into an open denial of the truth, and a daily neglect of the duties, of Christianity: from which it is evident, that baptism and regeneration are not necessarily connected. Others have considered repentance to be regeneration; but neither is this correct. *True* repentance often terminates in regeneration, and, indeed, is commonly connected with it; but it is not the

[90] Rev. vi. 16, 17. [91] 1 John, iii. 2. Is. xxv. 9.

thing itself. Others, again, regard reformation and regeneration as synonymous; but this notion is as incorrect as either of the former. Regeneration may accompany baptism, repentance, or reformation; but it is *more* than either of them. Saul became "another man," without becoming a *new* man: Ahab "humbled himself," yet became not truly humble: many repent of some great iniquity, but relapse again into evil courses: and some reform their conduct, because the state of their health, or perhaps the monitions of conscience, lead them so to reform; though they still remain ignorant of "the one thing needful," and have hearts as unimpressed as the "unwedgeable and gnarled oak."

To guard you against these and other erroneous views of conversion, to which your attention may sometimes be called, I shall endeavour to describe it concisely as it is portrayed in Scripture, our only unerring guide with respect to this and every other Christian doctrine.

And here you cannot fail to remark, for it must be evident to every impartial reader of the word of God, that the mutation, which we are now to contemplate, can neither be slight, nor transient, nor, in general, slow. In the principal texts, where it is delineated, it seems either named or characterized in reference to one or other of two modes or circumstances of change, both of which are important and usually rapid, compared with the corresponding duration of existence: these are *conversion* and *regeneration;* the one indicating frequently a turning from one thing towards another, and in theology, according to Dr. Johnson's definition, "a change from a state of reprobation to a state of grace;" and the other, a new creation, or a new birth; or, according to the same lexicographer, "birth by grace to a Christian life." The selection and classification of a very few texts will show that the two general terms I have just mentioned are not artificially forced into the technology of theologians, but are those which most naturally convey the idea of the change they are chosen to describe.

The prophet Jeremiah had manifestly something more in view than a mere nominal passage from one religion to another, when he fancied Ephraim, after bemoaning himself, to pray—" *Turn* thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God[1]." And again, in his faithful exhortation to the Jews—" Turn ye again now every one *from his evil way,* and from the evil of your doings[2]." More expressive still is the language of Joel—" Rend your *hearts,* and not your garments, and *turn unto the Lord your God,* for he is gracious and merciful[3]."

The language of our Lord to his disciples was, " Except ye be *converted,* and become as *little children,* ye *shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" " He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath *passed from death unto life*[4]."

The apostles speak of this change as equally momentous: their divine master taught them to preach to the Gentiles, that they might " *turn* them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins by faith." How great must be the transformation from the darkness of ignorance and vice to the light of knowledge and holiness; how delightful the emancipation from the thraldom of the devil to be placed under the merciful government of God! They therefore acted under the persuasion that " if any one erred from the truth, and one *converted* him, that he, which converted the sinner from the error of his way, *saved a soul from death;*" and considered this conversion as a deliverance " from the power of darkness, and a *translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son*[5]."

Among the numerous texts which evince this great change to be no less than an entire renovation of character, the following deserve notice. " *Create* in me *a clean heart,* O God; and *renew a right spirit* within me[6]."

[1] Jer. xxxi. 18. See also Lam. v. 21. [2] Jer. xxv. 5.
[3] Joel, ii. 13. [4] Matt. xviii. 3. John, v. 24.
[5] Acts, xxvi. 18. Jam. v. 19. Col. i. 13. [6] Ps. li. 10.

"I will put *a new spirit* within them; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh; that they may *walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances*, and do them[7]." Unless a man be born again, he *cannot* see the kingdom of God[8]." "*Born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*[9]." Though they are "dead," they shall "hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall *live*[10]." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision is any thing, nor uncircumcision, but *a new creation*[11]." "Love one another with a pure heart fervently, having been *born again* not from corruptible seed, but from *incorruptible*, by that word of God which liveth and remaineth[12]." "Every one that doeth righteousness (habitually) is born of *Him*[13]." "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" habitually, "and *loveth* and *believeth that Jesus is the Christ*, and *overcometh the world*[14]." "Christ saved us, according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and the *renovation of the Holy Spirit*[15]." "We are his workmanship, having been *created* through Christ Jesus to his *good works*[16]." "Ye have been instructed to put off the *old man*, who was *corrupt* according to deceitful desires, and to be *renewed in the Spirit of your mind*; and to put on the *new man*, who is *created* according to God in righteousness and true holiness[17]." "Wherefore, if any man be in Christ, there is a *new creation*: the *old things are passed away*, behold all things are become *new*[18]." "That which is *born of the flesh is flesh*, and that which is *born of the Spirit is spirit*. Wonder not that I said unto thee, Ye *must* be born again. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest its sound, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is *every one that is born of the Spirit*[19]."

[7] Ezek. xi. 19, 20. [8] John, iii. 3. [9] John, i. 13.
[10] John, v. 25. [11] Gal. vi. 15. [12] 1 Pet. i. 23.
[13] 1 John, ii. 29. [14] 1 John, iii. 9; iv. 7; v. 1, 4.
[15] Tit. iii. 5. [16] Eph. ii. 10. [17] Eph. iv. 22—24.
[18] 2 Cor. v. 17. [19] John, iii. 6—8.

From these passages it must appear, that the grand transformation we are now contemplating is not *ideal:* nor does it consist merely in enlightening and convincing the understanding, in a change of sentiments, or a change of outward conduct; though it often includes all these. A man may change his religious opinions, or his outward conduct, without experiencing a change of *heart:* and, on the other hand, a person may experience a genuine and complete change of heart (and the heart it must never be forgotten is the seat of true religion), without being able to trace the slightest difference in any one article of his creed. Every one knows, that in a certain sense the world is vanity, that he *must* die, that in the hour of death riches will not profit him, that time is precious, that the portion of it allowed us to prepare for eternity is uncertain and often short, that a death-bed repentance is not an infallible passport to heaven; and *many* know that they are sinners, that "Christ Jesus came to *save* sinners," that there is one, and *only one,* way of salvation. Yet though these are known and received as truths, they are not *felt* as such; they are but as the new-formed body of Adam, before "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," and need a touch from Him who alone can effectually (whether immediately, or by his own appointed instruments) reach the soul, to render them *living,* operative, efficacious sentiments.

In regeneration, so much of the light of heaven is let into the soul as enables us to know (or at least to *begin* to know) ourselves aright, to know God in his most awful and lovely manifestations, to see the enormity of sin, the "beauty of holiness," the worth of the Gospel, the "riches of divine grace." It is a light accompanied with warmth and vigour, that produces an internal and permanent change; a change that is universal, reaching to the heart, and evinced in the life; that renovates the powers of the spirit, dissipates folly, guilt, darkness, and despair, introduces holiness, joy, and hope, and creates in the soul an ardent, un-

quenchable desire to enjoy the life-supporting rays of the Sun of Righteousness, to be altogether holy, altogether heavenly, altogether full of affection towards God.

This change is rightly called *conversion:* not (as you have often known it represented) because it converts the subject of it from vivacity to lifelessness, from cheerfulness to gloom, from kindness and affability to churlishness and reserve; but because it converts him "from the error of his way," from the abuse to the proper use of the blessings with which he is surrounded, from a false to a true hope, from indifference to zeal, "from the power of Satan unto God." It is also as rightly denominated *regeneration;* for it brings the person who experiences it, not under the influence of the mechanical transports of animal nature, or the blind impulses of a heated imagination, or into the delusive paths of enthusiasm; but into a *new state,* through the operation of the Spirit of God upon the spiritual part of man. Surely there can be nothing essentially chimerical, nothing contrary to reason, nothing that is not highly ornamental and infinitely beneficial to our natures, in having the powers of our mind thus changed by energy imparted from God, and having our pursuits directed after such objects as are most worthy the attention and regard of intelligent, accountable, immortal creatures! "To have our apprehensions of Divine and spiritual things enlarged, and to have right conceptions of the most important matters; to have the stream of our affections turned from empty vanities to objects that are proper to excite and fix them; to have our resolutions set against all sin, and a full purpose formed within us of an immediate reformation and return to God, with a dependence on his grace to help us both to will and to do; to have our labours steadfastly applied to conquer sin, and to promote religion in ourselves and others; to have our entertainments founded in a religious life, and flowing in upon us from the sweet intercourse we have with God in his word and ordinances, and the delightful conversation that we sometimes

have with Christian friends; and, finally, to have our hopes drawn off from earthly things, and fixed upon eternity!—Where is there any thing can be more honourable to us, than thus to be *renewed after the image of him that created us*, and to *put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?* And where is any thing that can be more desirable than thus to have the darkness of our understandings cured, and the disorders rectified, that sin had brought upon our nature? Who is there that is so insensible of his depravity, as that he would not long for such a happy change? Or who is there that knows how excellent a work it is to be *transformed by the renewing of the mind*, that would not with the greatest thankfulness adore the riches of Divine grace, if it appear that he is thus become a new creature, that *old things are passed away, and all things are become new*[20]?"

That such improvements of character often *have* occurred, and are often taking place now, cannot be denied by any philosophic observer of human nature: to disregard them, or to neglect an investigation of their cause, is to neglect one of the most interesting and remarkable classes of facts observable amongst mankind. Who has not either heard of or witnessed the most extraordinary changes of conduct, produced through the *apparent* influence (to say the least) of religious motives? I say nothing here of the *three thousand* converted in one day at the feast of Pentecost,—of the conversion of St. Paul and others, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles,—because those are usually ascribed to the miraculous and *extraordinary* influences of the Holy Spirit in the apostolic times. But I may call your attention to matters of more recent occurrence. You have witnessed instances of men running eagerly the career of folly and dissipation, who have been suddenly arrested, and changed from "lovers of pleasure to lovers of God." You have known others who have devoted themselves early to the military profession,

[20] Doddridge's Sermons on Regeneration.

who literally knew *no* fear, who have spent their lives in the pursuit of glory, who have approached the verge of life full of scars and full of honours, still panting after "glory, honour, and immortality," but thinking nothing of "eternal life;" till touched by an irresistible hand, they have been transformed from good soldiers to "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," have buckled on "the armour of God," "fought the good fight of faith," and, following "the Captain of their salvation," have obtained "the victory," and been rewarded with *unfading* laurels. Others again, you have known, who have been strong and *high-minded*, professing never to be subdued but by the force of argument, and dexterously evading an argument when it *was* forcible, if it were calculated to expose the sophistry of "free-thinking" (as it is called), or to exhibit the reasonableness and advantages of being pious: you have seen them increase in the dexterity of unbelief, and in callousness to moral impression, year after year,

"Gleaning the blunted shafts that have recoil'd,
Aiming them at the shield of truth again:"

and when a band of them has gone to church for the laudable purpose of quizzing, or of staring out of countenance, some preacher of rather more than usual energy and zeal,—have known one of this band pierced by "a dart from the archer," convinced that religion is the "one thing needful," and, though he came "to scoff, remaining to pray."

Recollect, too, the recorded conversion of Cecilius (so finely described in the Octavius of Minutius Felix) in the early ages of the church: and those of Lord Rochester, of Colonel Gardiner, of Mr. Newton, and Mr. Scott, in later times; and contemplate them as *matters of fact.* Recollect, again, the memorable advice given by the late Dr. Price to Lord Shelburne, the father of the present Marquis of Lansdowne. That nobleman inquired of the philosophic doctor what would be the best means of reforming some profligate, idle, worthless fellows, who were employed on one of his estates; and was

recommended to "introduce a zealous methodist preacher among them." Here the reasoning was from a *fact*, and that no other than the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley among the Kingswood Colliers. "These were men who required not only to be *Christianized*, but *humanized*. It was a mighty mass of deformity, without shape or order: and it was moulded into the human form; nay, more, it received the impress of the Divine image, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of these laborious ministers. The world will not easily forget the transformation: when men, who scarcely had any thing about them human but their external configuration, changed their very nature; when the ferocious became softened, and the profane exemplary for the simplicity of holiness; and when the tears chased each other down their dark cheeks as they listened to the declarations of a Saviour's love, while the *total* alteration of their life and manners bore no resemblance to 'the morning cloud and the early dew which passeth away[21].'" Now either this is real regeneration, the genuine operation of the Spirit of God, or it is an effect without a cause, or at least without any cause even speciously assignable: we affirm, on the authority of Scripture, that it is the former,—and thus assign an adequate cause of this grand and durable effect: our opponents take the contrary alternative, and yet have the modesty to accuse *us* of enthusiasm. But if enthusiasm be a disease which is indicated by "overlooking the relation which subsists between ends and means,—by counting upon casualties instead of contemplating the stated order of events,—and by hoping to realize the most momentous projects without any means at all, or by means totally inadequate to the effect," it will not be difficult for any one to ascertain whether we or our adversaries are most deeply tainted by it.

Perhaps it may not be uninstructive for us to fix our attention upon the leading particulars of some remark-

[21] Collyer's Appeal to the Legislature.

able and well authenticated instance of conversion; and to this end allow me to select that of the Earl of Rochester, to which I adverted in my Letter on Prophecy[22]. In one respect it is doubtless defective, being void of evidence of the permanency of the change; and in that respect the examples of Colonel Gardiner, Mr. Newton, and Mr. Scott, have a decided advantage; but in these last-mentioned cases, the historians may by some be deemed suspicious witnesses, on account of the theological sentiments they supported; I therefore have chosen the instance which was thought worthy the attention of Bishop Burnet, a writer whom no candid reader will accuse of any the least proneness to fanaticism.

Lord Rochester was distinguished through the active part of his life as a great wit, and a great profligate, an open and unwearied advocate of atheism. He had, however, especially during the last year of his life, strong convictions of the folly of his conduct; and once, after he had been arguing vehemently against the existence of a Supreme Being, he exclaimed, on retiring from the company, "Good God, that a man who walks upright, who sees the wonderful works of God, and has the use of his reason,—that such a one should bid defiance to his Creator!" But impressions like these soon wore off: so that it was not till his last illness, which continued about nine weeks, that he appears to have undergone the change which we denominate conversion. Then it was, according to his own account, that he first saw the enormity of sin, and learned the value of the atonement on which his hopes of pardon were founded. "Shall the joys of heaven," exclaimed he, "be conferred on me? O mighty Saviour, never, but through thy infinite love and satisfaction! O never, but by the purchase of thy blood!"

The Scriptures, which had so often been the subject of his merriment, now secured his esteem, and impressed delight; for they had spoken to his *heart:* the seeming

[22] See page 127.

absurdities and contradictions vanished; and he thenceforward not only received the truth, but adhered to it. It appears to have been the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which was repeatedly read to him by Mr. Parsons, his chaplain, that was principally instrumental in the change. Comparing it with the history of our Saviour's passion, he saw the fulfilment of a prophecy, written several ages before, and which the Jews, who blasphemed Jesus, still kept in their hand as an inspired book. He confessed to Bishop Burnet, that, as he heard it read, "he felt an *inward force* upon him, which did so enlighten his mind and convince him, that he could resist it no longer: for the words had an authority which did shoot like rays or beams in his mind, so that he was not only convinced by the reasonings he had about it, which satisfied his understanding, but by a *power* which did so effectually *constrain him*, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour, as if he had seen him in the clouds."

He had this chapter read so often to him, that he "got it by heart, and went through a great part of it," says the Bishop, "in discourse with me, with a sort of heavenly pleasure, giving me his reflections on it: some of which I remember."—*Who hath believed our report?* "Here," he said, "was foretold the opposition the Gospel was to meet with from such wretches as he was." *He hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.* On this he said, "The meanness of his appearance and person has made vain and foolish people disparage him, because he came not in such a fool's-coat as they delighted in." Many other observations he made which were not noted down; enlarging on many passages with a degree of heavenly pleasure, and applying various parts of it to his own humiliation and comfort. "O my God," he would say, "can such a creature as I, who have denied thy being, and contemned thy power, be accepted by thee? Can there be mercy and pardon for me? Will God own such a wretch as I am?"

His faith now rested on Christ alone for salvation, and often would he entreat God to strengthen it; crying out, "Lord, I believe: help thou my unbelief." He gave numerous proofs of the depth of his repentance; amongst which his earnest desire to check and diminish the evil effects of his former writings, and too uniform example, deserve particular recollection. His abhorrence of sin was now as extraordinary as his former indulgence in it: he said more than once, "he would not commit a *known* crime to gain a kingdom."

"He told me (says the Bishop) he had overcome all his resentments to all the world; so that he bore ill-will to no person, nor hated any upon personal accounts. He had given a true state of his debts, and had ordered to pay them all, as far as his estate that was not settled could go; and was confident that, if all that was owing to him were paid to his executors, his creditors would be all satisfied. He said he found his mind now possessed with another sense of things, than ever he had formerly. He did not repine under all his pain, and in one of the sharpest fits he was under while I was with him, he said he did *willingly* submit; and, looking up to heaven, said, '*God's holy will be done, I bless him for all he does to me.*' He said he was contented either to die or live, as should please God: and though it was a foolish thing for a man to pretend to choose whether he would die or live, yet he rather wished to *die.* He knew he could never be so well that life should be comfortable to him. He was confident he should be happy if he died, but he feared if he lived he might relapse; and then said he to me, 'In what a condition shall I be, if I *relapse* after all this? But (he said) he trusted in the grace and goodness of God, and was resolved to avoid all those temptations, that course of life and company that was likely to ensnare him: and he desired to live on no other account, but that he might *by the change of his manners in some way take off the high scandal his former behaviour had given.*' All these things at several times I had from him; besides some messages which very well became

a dying penitent to some of his former friends, and a charge to publish any thing concerning him that might be a mean to reclaim others. Praying God, that *as his life had done much hurt, so his death might do some good.*

"Having understood all these things from him, and being pressed to give him my opinion plainly about his eternal state, I told him, that though the promises of the Gospel did all depend upon *a real change of heart and life*, as the indispensable condition upon which they were made, and that it was scarce possible to know certainly whether our hearts are changed, unless it appeared in our lives; and the repentance of most dying men being like the howlings of condemned prisoners for pardon, which flowed from no sense of their crimes, but from the horror of approaching death; there was little reason to encourage any to hope from such sorrowing: yet certainly if the mind of a sinner, even on a death-bed, be *truly renewed and turned to God*, so great is his mercy that he will receive him, even in that extremity. He said, 'he was sure his mind was entirely turned; and though *horror* had given him his first awakening, yet that was now grown up into a *settled faith and conversion*[23].'"

This narration naturally suggests several reflections: but these I must leave to be the result of your own meditations; and proceed to answer a few questions which arise out of the subject now before us.

1st. Is conversion absolutely necessary?

If this question is to be decided by the uniform tenour of Scripture, it *must* be answered in the affirmative. Some persons, I am aware, will tell you that, however necessary this great change may be among heathens, it is not universally requisite in a Christian country. But this notion is founded upon a very ina-

[23] See Bishop Burnet's work entitled "Some Passages in the Life and Death of John, Earl of Rochester," a work which cannot be recommended in more appropriate terms than those of Dr. Johnson, who said, "the critic ought to read it for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety."

dequate view of the subject. By nature all are Gentiles. We are "by nature the children of wrath, even as others[24]." Whether men bow down to idols of wood and stone, or are immersed in the cares, or idolizing the amusements, of this world, they may be equally distant from God, and equally need an entire change of *heart* to bring them to his spiritual presence, and restore them to his favour. "Those (says Bishop Tomline) who call themselves Christians, but attend neither to the doctrines nor to the duties of the Gospel, seem to differ but little, with respect to the point now under consideration, from those to whom the Gospel was first preached. *The process in both must be nearly the same*[25]." Both classes are descended from the corrupt stock of Adam, both are influenced by improper motives, both are strangers to "Christ the hope of glory;" both are "in the bond of iniquity," whether they are conscious of it or not; and, therefore, "*must* be born again." The necessity for this change is doubtless as extensive as that great moral declension, from which it is the object of the Christian dispensation to restore mankind: so that since "*all* have sinned," *all* are "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin," *all* must undergo a total change, or they "*cannot see the kingdom of God*[26]." Indeed nothing in religion can be more evident than that "if we be bound on earth, we shall be bound in heaven;" "if we be absolved here, we shall be loosed there;" for, in this sense, "where the tree falleth, there it shall lie[27]." Hence the prophets who preceded our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and the apostles who were commissioned to succeed him, all agreed in declaring that no unregenerate person shall enter the kingdom of God. The reason of this is obvious, both from the nature of God, and from that of man. "No unclean thing" can be admitted into the presence of God (who "cannot behold iniquity" but with abhorrence), nor into the regions of universal holiness and purity. And

[24] Eph. ii. 3. [25] Refutation of Calvinism, p. 59.
[26] Rom. v. 12, 14. Ps. li. 5. John, iii. 3. [27] Eccles. xi. 3.

on the other hand, if an unregenerate soul *could* be admitted, heaven would yield it no delight. Such a spirit would be incapable of relishing the happiness of a future world; for the knowledge there communicated, the enjoyments there experienced, are of a kind it never aspired after. The holiness of heaven, the sight and service of God, and of a glorified Redeemer, the society of angels and of saints made perfect, the "singing the song of Moses and the Lamb," would all be tasteless and insipid, if not disgusting, to one who had been a stranger to the employments and gratifications of religion while on earth. To believe otherwise would be to believe that a man could be regenerate and unregenerate at the same time. "The happiness of heaven (said Richard Baxter) is *holiness;* and to talk of being happy without it, is as palpable nonsense, as to talk of being well without health, or of being saved without salvation."

2dly. Is the exact era of this great renovation of character always assignable?

Certainly not; though in many cases it is. In the most momentous business of regeneration "there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all[28]." Through the blessing of God upon early instruction, the seeds of grace have been sown in the hearts of many during infancy. God ordains "strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings[29]," and enables them to give evidence at six or seven years of age that their hearts are principally fixed on "Christ and things divine." These, of course, cannot assign the period of their conversion. Others again, and perhaps the greater number of those who have had the benefit of a religious education, are led on by the suasive influence of Divine grace through such insensible gradations that they are unable to specify any remarkable circumstances attending their conversion, or to point out the particular time when it occurred. But others, and especially those who have passed

[28] 1 Cor. xii. 6. [29] Ps. viii. 2.

their lives without any internal religion, or those who have allowed themselves in the course and habit of some particular sin, who must undergo in maturity a complete revolution of principle, or a total change of conduct, are commonly roused by some alarming or some afflictive dispensation of Providence, to "flee from the wrath to come," and eagerly inquire "what they must do to be saved[30]?" To such persons, says Dr. Paley, "Conversion is too momentous an event ever to be forgot. A man might as easily *forget his escape from a shipwreck*." And though, says Bishop Taylor, "after the manner of this life our recollection is imperfect, yet the greatest changes of our state of grace or sin are *always present*, like capital letters to an aged and dim eye." "It may not be necessary" (Paley again) "for a man to *speak* of his conversion, but he will always *think* of it with unbounded thankfulness to the Giver of all grace, the Author of all mercies, spiritual as well as temporal[31]."

3dly. Is this important change ever sudden?

Most, if not all, of the instances of conversion recorded in the New Testament were sudden. This operation of God on the souls of men was then frequently instantaneous, and they were transformed from unbelievers to believers at once: "the Spirit fell on them while they heard the word[32]:" and in consequence of this miraculous effusion, they who had just before professed Judaism or Polytheism, and neither knew nor loved Jesus Christ, at once confessed his name and felt the power of his religion. But many moderns contend that sudden conversions, such as those to which we now advert, were confined to the apostolic times; as if the *common* operations of the Spirit were not sufficient to produce any rapid change. Yet I conceive it requires but slight reflection, to see that this their opinion comports neither with the declara-

[30] Acts, xvi. 30.

[31] Paley's Posthumous Sermons, pp. 123, 124. Taylor's Holy Living, ch. i. § 3. [32] Acts, x. 44.

tions of Scripture, nor with the usual phenomena of intellect or rules of action. Does not "God work in us both to will and to do" now as well as in the primitive times? Cannot the eyes of our understanding be as effectually and as speedily "enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom" now as then? Was the promise of "bestowing a new Spirit, and taking away the stony heart," confined to the early ages; or is God's arm "shortened," or weakened, that he cannot reach and at once turn our spirits now, as he has done with others before us? And, with regard to operations upon the mind, do men yield to them while the impressions are *strong*, or do they wait till they become weaker, and then give way? When a man is thoroughly persuaded that the course in which he is persevering is imminently dangerous, does he not *immediately* quit it? When he is convinced that the road in which he travels is conducting him *from* the place he wishes to reach, and is besides infested with robbers or beset with difficulties, does he not immediately come to a stand? And if a path be pointed out which is both direct and safe, will he not with cheerfulness and alacrity pursue his journey in that newly discovered path, and press forward to regain the time lost in the wrong road? Apply this reasoning to religion, and you will perceive that conversion not only *may* be, but in many cases *is necessarily*, sudden.

"Some men (Tillotson observes), by an extraordinary power of God's grace upon their hearts, are *suddenly changed*, and strangely reclaimed from a very wicked and vicious, to a very religious and virtuous course of life; and that which others attain by slower degrees, and great conflicts with themselves, before they can gain the upper hand of their lusts, these arrive at '*all of a sudden*,' by a mighty revolution wrought in them by the power of God's grace, and, as it were, by a new bias and inclination put upon their souls[33]."

[33] Tillotson's Works, vol. ii. p. 341, fol. ed. While the fourth

The inclination to deny this seems to have arisen from the confounding of two very distinct things, regeneration and sanctification. The former of these is the commencement of spiritual *life*, the other is spiritual or religious *growth*: the former is "a passing from death unto life," the latter a "changing from glory to glory;" and both "by the Spirit of the living God." If this distinction were duly attended to, I think the question would be set at rest.

4thly. May a person always know when he is in a converted state?

Probably not: but he may always with perfect ease ascertain the contrary. If he cherish worldly-mindedness or an unholy disposition, if he allow himself in the practice of any known sin, if he habitually neglect public worship or private communion with God, if allusions to conversion by others either excite his ridicule or provoke his wrath, he need no more waste time to inquire whether his religious state be safe, than to ask whether heavy bodies fall downwards when left to themselves, whether opium is soporific, or ardent spirits

edition of these Letters was going through the press, I met with the following in Richard Baxter's *Directions for Spiritual Peace*.

"When you are weighing things in the balance, you may add grain to grain, and it makes no turning or motion at all, till you come to the very last grain; and then *suddenly* that end which was downward is turned upward. When you stand at a loss between two highways, not knowing which way to go, as long as you are deliberate, you stand still; all the reasons that come into your mind do not stir you; but the last reason which resolves you, setteth you in motion. So is it in the change of a sinner's heart and life. He is not changed (but preparing towards it) while he is but deliberating, whether he should choose Christ or the world? But the last reason that cometh in and determineth his will to Christ, and makes him resolve and enter a firm covenant with Christ, and say, *I will have Christ for better or worse*, this maketh the greatest change that ever is made by any work in this world." "For how can there be greater than the turning of a soul from the creature to the Creator? So distant are the terms of this change. After this one turning act Christ hath that heart, and the main bent and endeavours of the life, which the world had before. The man hath a new end, a new rule, a new guide, a new master."

productive of intoxication. On the other hand, if, as Paley remarks, "he *allow* himself in no sin whatever, but, cost what it may, contends against and combats *all* sin:" if he sedulously cultivate a holy disposition, and "grow in grace, in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ," and in the steady practice of all the relative duties, he may *hope* that his spiritual life is commenced. Still, as we live in times of much religious delusion and infatuation, let him not be satisfied, let him cherish nothing like *assurance,* unless he uniformly feel tenderness of conscience, and a desire to increase his religious attainments. Let him then "*examine* himself whether he be in the faith." Let him seriously endeavour to ascertain whether he has "eternal life wrought in his heart;" whether he has ever felt a penitent sense and hatred of sin, a sincere and anxious desire to be delivered from it, an ardent love of the Saviour and his salvation, an unreserved determination to obey his commands from the heart; whether he finds any satisfaction of soul in drawing near to God through a Mediator; whether he has an increasing love to God; whether he has a rooted aversion to all neglect of duty; whether he has in any measure "overcome the world" as they who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and have put their trust in him; whether his desires to escape from the miseries of hell, however strong, are weaker than his desires after holiness and heaven; whether he is zealous in God's service, aims at his glory, delights in his presence, and in doing his "will on earth *as* it is done in heaven;" whether he can forgive enemies, can *sincerely* return blessing for cursing; whether he is anxious not simply to stand but to "*run* in the way of God's commandments." In religion there is no standing still; if we are actuated by true religious principles, they will continually impel us forward, and cause us, with Paul, to "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus[34]."

[34] Phil. iii. 14.

Be it remembered, then, that true repentance and conversion reduce all holy resolutions to actions, and either thus create religion, or transfer it from the head to the heart, there to reside *permanently* as an actuating principle. "He that resolves to live well when danger is upon him, or a violent fear, or when the appetites of lust are newly satisfied, or newly served, yet, when the temptation comes again, sins again, and then is sorrowful, and resolves once more against it, and yet falls when the temptation returns, is a vain man, but no *true penitent, nor in the state of grace*; and if he chance to die in one of those good modes is very far from salvation: for, if it be necessary that we *resolve* to live well, it is necessary we should *do* so. For resolution is an imperfect act, a term of relation, and signifies nothing but in order to the actions. It is as a faculty is to the act, as spring to the harvest, as eggs are to birds, as a relative to its correspondent, nothing without it. No man therefore can be in a state of grace and actual favour by resolutions and holy purposes; these are but the gate portal towards pardon: a HOLY LIFE is the only perfection of repentance, and *the firm ground upon which we can cast the anchor of hope in the mercies of God through Jesus Christ*[35]."

Know, however, for your encouragement, that "in Christ's temple it is not as in ordinary material buildings. In these, though the whole frame stand upon the foundation, yet it stands together by the strength of the parts amongst themselves, and therefore their mutual weakness and failings do prejudice the stability of the whole. But in the Church, the strength of Christ the foundation, is not an immanent, personal, fixed thing; but a derivative and an effused strength, which runs through the whole building. *Because the foundation, being a vital foundation, is able to shed forth and transfuse its stability into the whole structure.* Whatever the materials are of themselves, though never so frail, yet being once incorporated in the building, they

[35] Bishop Taylor's Holy Living, ch. iii. § 9.

are presently transformed into the nature and firmness of their foundation. '*To whom coming as unto a living stone,*' saith St. Peter, '*ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house*:' thus noting unto us the transformation and uniformity of the saints with Christ, both in their spiritual nature, and in the firmness and stability of the same."

When converted to God "we stand not, like Adam, upon our own bottom, but are branches of such a vine as never withers; members of such a head as never dies; sharers in such a spirit as cleanseth, healeth, and purifieth the heart; partakers of such promises as are sealed with the oath of God. Since, then, we live not by our own life, but by the life of Christ; are not led or sealed by our own spirit, but by the Spirit of Christ; do not obtain mercy by our own prayers, but by the intercession of Christ; stand not reconciled in virtue of our endeavours, but by the propitiation wrought by Christ, who 'loved us when we were enemies;' who is both willing and able to save us to the uttermost, and to preserve his own mercies in us; to whose office it belongs to take order that none who are given unto him be lost; undoubtedly that life of Christ in us, which is thus underpropped, though it be not privileged from temptations, nor from backslidings, yet is an abiding life." "Infinitely, therefore, doth it concern the soul of every man to be restless and unsatisfied with any other good thing, till he find himself entitled unto this happy communion with the Life of Christ, which will never fail him[36]."

LETTER XVII.

On the Influences of the Spirit.

AMONG the several momentous doctrines that are developed in the system of revelation, none seems to have experienced a reception less consistent with the natural

[36] Reynolds's Three Treatises, p. 454.

order of things, than that of the influence of the Spirit of God upon the mind and conduct of man. This doctrine is so compatible with the dictates of unassisted reason, that several of the heathen philosophers firmly believed it, and unambiguously asserted it. Yet, notwithstanding this, it is doubted by some philosophers residing in Christian countries; and although it is plainly declared in various portions of Scripture, still the only persons, as far as I know, by whom it is positively and unhesitatingly denied and despised, are professing *Christians*[1]. This singular anomaly in the progress of opinion is often ascribed to the gradual expansion of the mental faculties, occasioned by the constant accumulation of the store of scientific, literary, and Biblical knowledge;—especially since the era of the Reformation, when a new impulse was given to every species of human inquiry. The reason thus assigned, however, though plausible, is not satisfactory. Old sciences have, it is true, been much improved and extended; and new sciences have often grown with rapidity out of the old stock; so that truths which in one age have stood almost at the summit of knowledge, have in the next sunk into the mere elements; or propositions which in one age have been received as irrefragable, have in a succeeding age been exploded as untenable and fallacious. But nothing of this kind can be traced with regard to religious truth. The incessant and successful labours of Biblical critics have removed many impurities in existing copies, especially of the New Testament; and, by a careful collation of different manuscripts, have expunged errors and removed difficulties; but they have not added *one* proposition to the repository of revealed knowledge, as it was left by the apostles: nor have they taken *one* proposition

[1] Persons who thus despise and reject, one by one, the constituents of vital Christianity, may be addressed in the quaint language of an old theologian, "I beseech you, sirs, as you regard the reputation of your reason, tell us, why you will *profess* a religion which you *abhor*? Or, why will you *abhor* a religion which you *profess*?"

away. The Bible gave the same view of human nature to the Primitive Christians in the early ages, and to the Reformers in the sixteenth century, as it exhibits to us: it pointed out the same method of salvation, and promised like aids of "the same Spirit," to pious persons in all times, and in all places. This, indeed, is essential to its perfection, and fits it for universality: while the unceasing modifications in human sciences, notwithstanding their gradual augmentation, at on prove their imperfection, and suggest the strong probability that such imperfection will never be completely removed in the present state of existence.

But, without pursuing farther this train of reflection, permit me now to lay before you the opinions of philosophic heathens relative to the subject of Divine influences. That *they* thought the Deity the Inspirer of pure thoughts and holy conduct, as well as the Author of animal life, will, I conceive, be sufficiently obvious from the few quotations I shall here select. XENOPHON represents *Cyrus*, with his dying breath, "as humbly ascribing it to a *Divine influence* on his mind, that he had been taught to acknowledge the care of Providence, and to bear his prosperity with a becoming moderation[2]." PLATO describes *Socrates* as declaring that "wheresoever virtue comes, it is apparently the fruit of a Divine dispensation[3]." And PLATO, XENOPHON, ANTISTHENES, and PLUTARCH testify, that *Socrates* publicly declared before his judges, that he was accompanied by an invisible conductor, or attendant spirit, whose frequent interposition stopped him in the commission of evil. Plato also himself observes, that "*virtue is not to be taught but by Divine assistance*[4]." And in his sixth book, De Republica, he affirms that "if any man escape the temptations of life, and behave himself as becomes a worthy member of society, he has reason to own that *it is God who saves*

[2] Xen. Cyropæd. lib. viii. cap. 7, § i.
[3] Plat. Men. ad. fin. p. 428. [4] Epinom p. 1014.

him[5]." SIMPLICIUS has a prayer "to God, as the Father and Guide of reason, so to co-operate with us as to purge us from all carnal and brutish affections, that we may be enabled to act according to the dictates of reason, and to attain to the true knowledge of God himself[6]." MAXIMUS TYRIUS argues "that if skill in the professions and sciences is insinuated into men's minds by a Divine influence, we can much less imagine that a thing so much more excellent as virtue is, can be the work of any mortal art; for the notion must be very strange to think that God is liberal and free in matters of less moment, and sparing in the greatest." And in the same discourse he remarks that "even the best disposed minds, as they are seated in the midst between the highest virtue and extreme wickedness, need *the assistance of God to incline and lead them to the better side*[7]." TULLY, in a passage quoted in the third letter of this series, declares that "No man was ever truly great without some *Divine influence*[8]." And SENECA, when he is speaking of a resemblance to the Deity in character, ascribes it to his influence upon the mind: "Are you surprised (says he) that man should approach to the Gods? It is God that comes to men: nay, which is yet more, *he enters into them*: for no mind becomes virtuous, but *by his assistance*[9]."

Numerous passages might easily be extracted from the Christian apologists and other writers in the first four centuries, to elucidate and confirm the same great truth[10]. But, as I wish to reduce this branch of our inquiry into as narrow compass as possible, you will prefer my laying before you the sentiments of the venerable English Reformers, as they are represented

[5] De Repub. lib. vi p. 677, Ed. Francof. 1602.
[6] Simplic. in Epictet. ad fin.
[7] Max. Tyr. Dissert. xxii.
[8] See p. 40.
[9] Senec. Epistol. lxxiii.
[10] For a brief but judicious summary of the sentiments of those individuals in every age from the Fathers down to the Reformation, who were either famous for piety, or instruments of the several minuter changes which led to the Reformation itself, see the Edinburgh Christian Instructor, vol. v. pp. 325—328.

in the Homilies: that their notions on this point were sufficiently clear and decisive will appear from a quotation or two. "The charity wherewith we love our brethren (say they) is verily God's work in us. If after our fall we repent, it is by him that we repent, which reached forth his merciful hand to raise us up. If we have any will to rise, it is he that preventeth our will, and disposeth us thereto. If after contrition we feel our consciences at peace with God through remission of our sin, and so be reconciled again to his favour, and hope to be his children and inheritors of everlasting life; who worketh these great miracles in us? Our worthiness, our deservings, our wits, our virtue? Nay, verily, St. Paul will not suffer flesh and clay to presume to such arrogancy, and therefore saith, *All is of God.*" "Without his lively and secret inspiration can we not once so much as speak the name of our Mediator, as St. Paul plainly testifieth; *no man can once name our Lord Jesus Christ, but in the Holy Ghost.* Much less should we be able to believe and know those great mysteries that be opened to us by Christ." "Very liberal and gentle is the Spirit of Wisdom. In his power shall we have sufficient ability to know our duty to God, in him shall we be comforted and encouraged to walk in our duty, in him shall we be meet vessels to receive the grace of Almighty God; for it is he that purgeth and purifieth the mind by his secret working. He lighteneth the heart to conceive worthy thoughts of Almighty God, he sitteth in the tongue of man to stir him to speak his honour: no language is hid from him, for he hath the knowledge of all speech, he only ministereth spiritual strength to the powers of our soul and body. To hold the way which God hath prepared for us to walk rightly in our journey, we must acknowledge that it is the power of his Spirit which helpeth our infirmity. That we may boldly come in prayer, and call upon Almighty God as our Father, it is by this Holy Spirit, which maketh intercession for us with continual sighs. If any gift we have wherewith we

may work to the glory of God, and profit of our neighbour, all is wrought by his own and self-same Spirit, which maketh his distributions peculiar to every man as he will[11]."

Fix your thoughts for a moment upon the mass of opposition and aversion which *must* be removed before Christian principles get possession of the heart, and you will soon perceive that nothing short of Divine energy can effectually subdue it. Within us, there are the opposition of darkness, and blindness, and ignorance, only to be dispelled by heavenly light; the aversion of error and prejudice, and of overweening self-esteem; a love of sin, to be transformed into hatred; a prevailing sensuality, to be mortified and subdued: all these engrafted upon the trunk of custom, a baneful tree, so deeply rooted in the corruptions of our nature that nothing short of supernatural efforts can remove it from the soil in which it has thriven ever since the fall of man. Without us, there are to be overcome, the allurements and fascinations of the world, the scoffs and taunts of men given up to the world, and, where no other persecution prevails, there may still be experienced the persecution of the tongue, and, that which is peculiarly trying to an upright man, the misinterpretation of motives and principles of action; and all this, be it not forgotten, aided by the suggestions of the most intellectual of fallen beings, the great enemy of souls, "the Prince of the Power of the Air." What besides the Spirit of God can neutralize such malignant agency, can subdue such powerful internal and external opposition?

These are no new notions engendered, as you may be told, in the hot-bed of enthusiasm; but are consistent with the sentiments of a very great majority of religious writers from the Reformation down to the present time. Even Bishop Tomline, though his language on several religious topics indicates a strange

[11] Homily for Rogation Week, 3d part, pp. 412—414. Oxf. ed. 1810.

aversion to the notions current amongst the majority of pious men, yields his testimony in favour of the doctrine now in contemplation. In explaining the words of the Liturgy, "O, God, because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing, without thou grant us the help of thy grace," &c. his Lordship says, "I have only to observe that the 'good thing' here mentioned must mean *good in the sight of God:* such an action our weak and *unassisted* nature will unquestionably not allow us to perform." To the same purpose he observes in another place, "The human mind is so weakened and vitiated by the sin of our first parents, that we cannot by our own natural strength *prepare it, or put it into a proper state for the reception of a saving faith,* or for the performance of the *spiritual* worship required in the Gospel; this mental purification *cannot be effected without Divine assistance.*" Once more: "The grace of God prevents us Christians, that is, it goes before, it gives *the first spring* and rise to our endeavours, that we may have a good will: and when this good will is thus excited, the grace of God does not desert us, but it *works with us when we have that good will.*" And again:—"It is acknowledged that man has not the disposition, and consequently not the *ability,* to do what in the sight of God is good, *till he is influenced by the Spirit of God*[12]."

Christians then ascribe, or ought to ascribe, every intellectual, moral, and spiritual attainment to God. And when we speak of the *ordinary* influences of the Spirit of God, we mean to impute to the operation of that Spirit our turning from vanity, folly, or thoughtlessness unto God,—our sanctification,—all the actions of our Christian course, our constancy and perseverance, —all particular graces and virtues which we seek at his hands,—our adoption,—our access to God and assistance in prayer,—our "joy and peace in believing,"—our support in trials and afflictions, and deliverance from temptations,—our continual progress in

[12] Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism, pp. 54, 60, 61, 67, 68.

holiness; and we affirm that these gifts are not offered to here and there a favoured individual, but to all sincere Christians in every age of the church; for, when speaking of the promise of the Spirit, the declaration of PETER was as universal as language could make it —"the promise is *to you and to your children; and to all that are afar off* (either in point of space or of time), to as many as the Lord our God shall call[13]." That this opinion is compatible with the uniform tenour of Scripture will be made evident by a few quotations set down promiscuously, as they occur to my mind.

"No man, speaking by the Spirit of God, saith 'Jesus is accursed:' and no man can say 'Jesus is the Lord' but by the Holy Spirit. There are differences of gifts, but it is the same Spirit[14]." "We have not received the spirit of the world, but that which is from God, that we may know the things which have been freely given to us of God[15]." "Such *were* some of you; but ye have been washed, ye have been sanctified, ye have been justified, by the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God[16]." "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; since *the Spirit of God dwelleth* in you. But *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*" "If through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." "The Spirit also helpeth our weaknesses; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself intercedeth for us in groans which cannot be expressed[17]:" or, as Doddridge renders the latter clause, "the Spirit itself manages affairs for us with unutterable groanings." "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, in believing; that ye may abound in hope *through the power of the Holy Spirit.*" "That the Gentiles might be made an acceptable offering, being *sanctified by the Spirit*[18]." "He who hath *begun* a good work

[13] Acts, ii. 39. [14] 1 Cor. xii. 3, 4. See also ver. 6.
[15] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [16] 1 Cor. vi. 11.
[17] Rom. viii. 9, 14, 26. Dodd. in loc. [18] Rom. xv. 13, 16.

in you, will *finish* it until the day of Jesus Christ[19]." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength[20]." "My gracious assistance is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect in weakness[21]." "He saved us, not by works of justification which we did, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration, even *the renovation of the Holy Spirit*, which he shed on us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour[22]." "That good doctrine which is committed to thy trust, keep, through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us[23]." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty[24]." "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which hath been given us[25]." "That ye may be *strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that, being rooted and grounded in love, ye may know the surpassing love of the knowledge of Christ." "For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance[26]." "Unless a man be born of water, and *of the Spirit*, he *cannot* enter into the kingdom of God." "He that abideth in me and I in him, he beareth much fruit; but, severed from me, ye can do *nothing*." "Nevertheless, it is expedient for you that I go away; for, if I go not away, the Advocate (Comforter, Monitor, or Instructor, Παρακλητος,) will not come unto you; but if I go I will send him unto you. And when he is come he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. When *he* cometh, *even the Spirit of truth*, he will guide you into all the truth[27]." "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit also, which God hath given to those that obey him[28]." "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that

[19] Phil. 1. 6. [20] Is. xl. 31. [21] 2 Cor. xii. 9.
[22] Tit. iii: 5. [23] 2 Tim. i. 14. [24] 2 Cor. iii. 17.
[25] Rom. v. 5. [26] Eph. iii. 16, 18, 19. Gal. v. 22.
[27] John, iii. 5; xv. 5; xvi. 7, 8, 13. [28] Acts, v. 32.

we are the children of God[29]." "In whom ye, having believed, have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the purchased possession." "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father[30]." "I can do *all things through him who strengtheneth me*[31]." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God; and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man corrupt the temple of God, God will corrupt him; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God[32]?" Therefore, "offend (or grieve) not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye have been sealed to the day of redemption." But, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is *God that worketh in you* both to will and to do (i. e. influences your desires and endeavours), of his benevolence[33]."

Such is the language of Scripture; from which it is manifest that it is not a mark of ignorant enthusiasm, but of pious reliance upon the Divine promise, to *expect* the assistances of the Spirit of God, when they are humbly sought in the way of his appointment. The mode in which these influences are communicated may be indefinitely diversified, but the effect will uniformly be the improvement of the religious character, a more complete emancipation from the domination of passions, from the slavery of sin; or, to express the continued effect in Scripture phraseology, it will be "*growth in grace.*" In accomplishing this, the whole circle of means and instruments, animate and inanimate, by which we are circumscribed, is within the reach of God, and at his command. Sometimes he has recourse to alarming dispensations of his Providence, which awaken a sense of the fluctuating nature of all terrestrial sources of enjoyment, teach us our depend-

[29] Rom. viii. 15, 16. [30] Eph. i. 13, 14; ii. 18.
[31] Phil. iv. 13. [32] 1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19.
[33] Eph. iv. 30. Phil. ii. 12, 13.

ance upon Him, and lead us to repose our entire confidence on Him alone. At other times he employs the conversations, the arguments, perhaps the faithful remonstrances, of Christian friends, to stimulate us in the path of duty, and point us to "the fountain of living waters." At others, and this most frequently, he makes use of "the word of truth," either read or preached: this he has assured us he will "render lively and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and to be a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart[34];" and thus, by putting life into it, cause it by an irresistible energy to communicate spiritual life to our souls. Sometimes he operates upon us by the recollection of past occurrences, and "while we are thus musing, the fire of divine love burns" within us[35]. On such occasions He can awaken a dormant idea which long lay neglected in the memory, can secretly attract the attention of the mind to it, can enable, or compel, us to trace its various relations, can throw a lustre upon things which were obscure, place those which seemed remote immediately before our mental eye, suspend the operation of secular objects, dispel the clouds of prejudice, impart an unusual power to what was before considered as trifling or unworthy *present* regard, convince us fully and *practically* of the vanity of all enjoyments except those which are consecrated by religion, and thus effectually lead us to "fix our affections on things above." In these, and numerous other ways, there may be a positive operation of the Spirit of God upon men's minds, though they may be utterly unconscious of it. His energy is not the less real, because it is silent, secret, and unperceived; for here, as well as in the management of the natural world,

> "Alone He works in all, yet He alone
> Seems not to work."—THOMSON.

[34] Heb. iv. 12. [35] Ps. xxxix. 3.

To ridicule, disbelieve, and deny all this, has of late been reckoned an indication of a powerful and philosophic mind; yet it requires but a cursory examination to perceive that such is a spurious criterion of true elevation either of sentiment or character; and to affirm, on the contrary, that, with only our present knowledge of human intellect and of Divine power, the denial of spiritual influences is as unphilosophical as it is impious.

No person can look into the world with the eyes of a philosopher, and not soon ascertain that the grand theatre of phenomena which lies before him is naturally subdivided into two great classes of scenery, the one exhibiting constrained, the other voluntary, motion; the former characteristic of matter, the latter as clearly indicating something perfectly distinct from matter, and possessing totally different qualities. "Pulverize matter (says Saurin), give it all the different forms of which it is susceptible, elevate it to its highest degree of attainment, make it vast and immense, moderate or small, luminous or obscure, opaque or transparent, there will never result any thing but *figures*; and never will you be able by all these combinations or divisions to produce one single sentiment, one single thought."* The reason is obvious: a substance compounded of innumerable parts, which every one acknowledges matter to be, cannot be the subject of an individual consciousness, the seat of which *must* be a simple and undivided substance; as the great Dr. Clarke has long ago irrefragably shown. Intellect and volition are of a quite different nature from corporeal figure or motion, and must reside in, or emanate from, a different kind of being, a kind which, to distinguish it from matter, is called spirit or mind. Of these, the one is necessarily inert, the other essentially active. The one is characterized by want of animation, life, and even motion, except as it is urged by something *ab extra;* the other is living, energetic, self-moving, and possessed of power to move other things. We often fancy, it is true, that matter moves matter; but

this, strictly speaking, is not correct. When one wheel or lever in a system of machinery communicates motion to another, it can at most only communicate what it has received, and if you trace the connexion of the mechanism, you will at length arrive at a first mover, which first mover is, in fact, *spiritual*. If, for example, it be an animal, it is evidently the spiritual part of that animal from whence the motion originally springs. If, otherwise, it be the descent of a weight, or the fall of water, or the force of a current of air, or the expansive force of steam, the action must ultimately be referred to what are termed powers of nature, that is, to gravitation or elasticity; and these, it is now well known, cannot be explained by any allusion to material principles, but to the indesinent operation of the Great Spirit, in whom we live, and move, and have our being—the finger of God touching and urging the various subordinate springs, which in their turn move the several parts of the universe. Thus God acts in all places, in all times, and upon all persons. The whole material world, were it not for his Spirit, would be inanimate and inactive[36]: all motion is derived either from his energy, or from that of spirits which he animates; and it is next to *certain* that the only primary action is that of spirit, and the most direct and immediate that of spirit upon spirit.

All consistent Theists allow that God is every where present by his essence, and as Bishop Taylor has most exquisitely expressed it, "God is every where present by his *power*. He rolls the orbs of heaven with his hand, he fixes the earth in its place with his foot, he guides all the creatures with his eye, and refreshes

[36] See *Baxter on the Soul*, § 2, in which that acute metaphysician proves the necessity of an immaterial mover in all spontaneous motions; and Professor *Vince's Essay on the Cause of Gravitation*, in which he assigns many cogent reasons for believing that the Deity "in his government does not act by material instruments, but that the whole is conducted by *his* more immediate agency, without the intervention of material causes."

them with his influence; he makes the powers of hell to shake with his terrors, and binds the devils with his word, and throws them out with his command, and sends the angels on embassies with his decrees; he hardens the joints of infants, and confirms the bones when they are secretly fashioned. He it is that assists at the numerous productions of fishes; and there is not one hollowness at the bottom of the sea, but he shows himself to be Lord of it, by sustaining there the creatures that come to dwell in it; and in the wilderness the bittern and the stork, the dragon and the satyr, the unicorn and the elk, live upon his provisions, and revere his power, and feel the force of his Almightiness."

If, then, the *moral* well-being of the universe be of greater importance than its mere existence; and that it is so is evident from the fact, that the continuance of the earth is solely rendered subservient to "the gathering in of the saints," after which "the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will be greatly heated and dissolved[37]," if it be irreconcilable with the idea of a wise governor to imagine that he will incessantly attend to minor matters, and as habitually disregard concerns of greater moment, then may we adopt the succeeding language of the same admirable writer, and say, that "God is especially present in the hearts of his people by his Holy Spirit; and indeed the hearts of holy men are temples in the truth of things, and in type and shadow they are heaven itself. For God reigns in the *hearts* of his servants: there is his kingdom. The energy of grace hath subdued all his enemies: there is his power. They serve him night and day, and give him thanks and praise: that is his glory. This is the religion and worship of God in the temple. The temple itself is the heart of man; Christ is the High Priest, who from thence sends up the incense of prayers, and joins them to

[37] Is. lxv. 8. Matt. v. 13; xxiv. 22, 31. 2 Pet. iii. 10.

his own intercession, and presents all together to his Father; and the Holy Ghost, by his dwelling there, hath also consecrated it into a temple; and God dwells in our hearts by faith, and Christ by his Spirit, and the Spirit by his purities: so that we are also cabinets of the mysterious Trinity: and what is this short of heaven itself, but as infancy is short of manhood, and letters of words[38]?"

Many, I am aware, ascribe all notions of communion with God, and the operations of the Spirit, to "some strange ferment of the *animal* spirits." But this is to give mere words in current payment, and leave the phenomenon unexplained. For, if you inquire, what are the animal spirits? how do they ferment? how does this temporary fermentation produce a permanent change of character, enduring through life, with no other modification than the constant approximations to still greater perfection? you immediately reduce the assertors to silence, and leave them to enjoy the consolation of seeing their much vaunted proposition shrinking into its pristine vacuity and inanity. And where indeed is the necessity of recurring to any other theory to explain this momentous class of facts, than that which the Scriptures present? Why should the Deity, whose moral excellences if possible outshine his majesty and his power, be excluded from interference in the moral department of his creation? Where is the philosophy of imagining (when it is acknowledged that God created us, sustains us by his power, cherishes us by his providential care, and sheds upon us temporal blessings) that he will never pour his influences into the soul, the only avenue through which Religion can enter, or from which it can proceed? We are taught by the great Author of Christian knowledge that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." He therefore "searches the heart;" and the only religion he approves is a

[38] Bishop Taylor's Holy Living, ch. 1, § 3.

spiritual religion, manifested, it is true, by external deportment, by uprightness of conduct, and purity of life, but still having its seat in the soul: and yet we are to be told that he has it not in his power, or it comports not with his purposes, to reach the spiritual part of man. The writers of the New Testament exhort us to fervency and frequency in prayer; but our modern promulgators of Christianity improved (for such they esteem it by their innovations), remove the very basis of prayer: for what is prayer but aspiration of soul, "spiritual breathing?" what can a religious creature, as such, pray for, but to be rendered better? and how can he possibly be rendered better but by experiencing Divine energy, by having strength and goodness imparted to him from the Fountain of strength and excellence, that is, by being made a recipient of the influences of the Spirit?

Farther, I believe it will be found that those who deny this consolatory and cheering doctrine, by so doing, exclude the greater while they admit the less: and that, whether they believe in spiritual existences, or are completely materialists in theory. Whether the mind be purely spiritual (that is, in this sense, immaterial), or some ethereal conformation of refined matter, it is an incontrovertible fact that mind can act upon mind, either mediately or immediately. For example: A correspondent at a distance communicates his sentiments to me by written symbols: on the perusal of these my mind is completely operated upon, and more powerfully than the wheels of a watch by its mainspring, or of a clock by its pendulum and descending weight: joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure, malevolent or benevolent sympathies, shall thence be excited: and this is the entire operation of human intellect upon human intellect, through the medium of the various instruments we have in our power. Similar effects result from the perusal of poetry, or from witnessing dramatic representations. I repeat that they are the genuine influence of mind upon

mind: and you will at once perceive the truth of the assertion, if you simply recollect, that by excluding the thinking, inventive, sentient, percipient part (whatever it be) from writers, readers, performers, and spectators, you in consequence annihilate the whole of this interesting class of phenomena. This, then, being the case, there remains no other alternative than either to admit that the mind of God can act upon the mind of man, or to concede to the human intellect greater power than belongs to the Most Powerful; a conclusion from which it must be a singularly strong mind indeed that does not recoil with horror and dismay.

Having thus shown that the doctrine of Divine influences is revealed in Scripture, and is consistent with the purest philosophy, it remains that I fortify it against one or two prevailing abuses. And first, it is by some affirmed that the gift of the Spirit is arbitrary, that is, *entirely* independent of human conduct or human qualifications; but that this is invariably the case, is not, I apprehend, a fair inference from the New Testament, contemplated in the aggregate, however it may have been deduced from some insulated passages. There is, I conceive (though on this delicate subject I would speak with diffidence, and with the deepest conviction of the omnipotent energy with which the Spirit often prepares its own way) an established connexion between the condition of those who are, or will be, believers, and the communication of spiritual life and growth; and that connexion may be doubtless founded upon sufficient reasons in the nature of things, though they may not have the least dependance upon antecedent merit, and are, and must be, unknown to us in our present state. God sees us as we are, and imparts to us according to our necessities, and his own wise and beneficent (not capricious) intentions, efficacious grace being given to some, while sufficient grace is offered to all. Divine assistance thus bestowed does not take away our liberty, but frees us from "bondage," and, as

David expresses it, "enlargeth our hearts to run the way of God's commandments." And though it is conferred gratuitously, and not because we *deserve* it, yet we must not assert that it is usually in its origin imparted arbitrarily; for it is communicated in answer to prayer, and we are exhorted to *pray for it.* "If ye (says the Lord), being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to *them that ask him?*" And conformably with this the first great effusion of the Spirit was given in answer to prayer, when the disciples were for that purpose "with one accord in one place;" and, on another occasion, "when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they had assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spake the word of God with freedom[39]."

Nor, again, is the operation of the Spirit arbitrary in *degree.* Its rule and measure is, "Whosoever hath much, to him shall be given, and he shall abound: but whosoever hath little, from him shall be taken even that which he hath[40]." Hence result the exhortations of the apostles to the Gentiles, which would otherwise be sufficiently remarkable: "*Be strong* in the grace which is by Jesus Christ." "*Strengthen yourselves* in the Lord and in the power of his might." "*Be filled with the Spirit,* speaking to one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs[41]."

Nor, on the other hand, is the withholding or the withdrawing spiritual influences merely an arbitrary act. It is the just punishment of men's wickedness, perverseness, and folly, in trifling with the means of grace, "doing despite unto the Spirit," and thus "grieving that Spirit," till it is compelled to withdraw[42]. Hence, by the way, results the necessity of constant

[39] Luke, xi. 13. Acts, ii. 1; iv. 31. See also James, i. 3.
[40] Matt. xiii 12. Luke, viii. 18.
[41] 2 Tim. ii. 1. Eph. vi. 10; v. 18, 19.
[42] Heb. x. 29. Eph. iv. 30.

self-denial and watchfulness: because it is evident that, so far as we indulge any vanity of mind, or corruption of heart, so far we resist the graces of the Spirit, and render ourselves indisposed to relish and improve its inspiration: we should, therefore, sedulously avoid all those tempers and employments, all those enjoyments and indulgences which may cause us to be less able, and less disposed, to improve those degrees of Divine grace that are communicated to us."*

Lastly, I may remark, that the doctrine under consideration is most awfully abused by every one who says, "I can do nothing without Divine assistance, therefore I will sit still and use no effort for my recovery till God irresistibly impel me to it." Here, as in numerous other instances, the state of torpid inactivity persevered in is completely different from that which is recommended and adopted in all analogous circumstances where religion is not concerned. For, although, as it is forcibly expressed in the Anglican Liturgy, "we have no power of ourselves, to help ourselves," yet it does not follow that we can do *nothing:* we can put ourselves in the way to obtain the aid offered to us. The dependance of the creature on God is not confined to religious matters, but runs through all our concerns. We can no more stretch out our hands, or walk, than we can raise our hearts to God, without his aid; yet stretching out the hands, or walking, is perfectly voluntary. Our gardens and our fields will be totally unproductive, unless God further our endeavours by his agency and his blessing: yet who but a madman or an idiot would think this a sufficient excuse for neglecting the culture of his garden, or the business of ploughing and sowing in his fields? Spiritual influences neither destroy our moral liberty, nor remove our moral responsibility; but bring with them a corresponding class of duties. "Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life," was our Lord's language. We are not to be careless in our conduct, because we are assured of the sug-

gestions, reproofs, and expostulations of our faithful friends; nor are we to be supine in our religious concerns because we know not how soon or how long it may be before the suggestions and monitions of the Holy Spirit are prevailingly influential. The Apostle Paul does not refer to the promised aids of the Spirit, as an argument for sloth, but for exertion; his language (already quoted in this letter) is—"Work out *your own* salvation with fear and trembling; *for* it is God that influences your desires and endeavours of his benevolence."

As this topic, and especially exhortation to obey the solicitations of the Spirit, falls peculiarly within the province of ministers of the Gospel, allow me to terminate this letter by a quotation from an excellent modern author, whose eloquence and piety on this as on all occasions mutually adorn each other.

"Though a general attention to the duties of piety and virtue, and a careful avoidance of the sins opposed to these, are certainly included in a becoming deportment to the Holy Spirit, perhaps it is not *all* that is included. The children of God are characterized in Scripture by their being 'led by the Spirit:' *led*, evidently not impelled, not driven forward in a headlong course, without choice or design; but being, by the constitution of their nature, rational and intelligent, and by the influence of grace rendered spiritual, they are disposed to obey at a touch, and to comply with the gentle insinuations of Divine grace; they are ready to take that precise impression which corresponds with the mind and purpose of the Spirit. You are aware of what consequence it is in worldly concerns to embrace opportunities, and to improve critical seasons; and thus, in the things of the Spirit, there are times peculiarly favourable, moments of happy visitation, where much more may be done towards the advancement of our spiritual interest than usual. There are gales of the Spirit, unexpected influences of light and of power, which no assiduity in the means of grace

can command, but which it is a great mark of wisdom to improve. If the husbandman is attentive to the vicissitudes of weather, and the face of the sky, that he may be prepared to take the full benefit of every gleam of sunshine, and every falling shower, how much more alert and attentive should we be, in watching for those influences from above, which are necessary to ripen and mature a far more precious crop!

"Permit me to suggest two or three heads of inquiry. You have sometimes felt a peculiar seriousness of mind, the delusive glare of worldly objects has faded away, or become dim before your eyes, and death and eternity, appearing at the door, have filled the whole field of vision. Have you improved such seasons for fixing those maxims and establishing those practical conclusions which may produce an habitual sobriety of mind, when things appear under a different aspect? You have sometimes found, instead of a reluctance to pray, a powerful impulse to that exercise, so that you felt as if you could do nothing else. Have you always complied with these motions, and suffered nothing but the claims of absolute necessity to divert you from pouring out your hearts at a throne of grace? The Spirit is said to make intercession for saints, with groanings which cannot be uttered; when you have felt those ineffable longings after God, have you indulged them to the utmost? Have you spread every sail, launched forth into the deep of the divine perfections and promises, and possessed yourselves as much as possible of the fulness of God? There are moments when the conscience of a good man is more tender, has a nicer and more discriminating touch than usual; the evil of sin in general, and of his own in particular, appears in a more pure and piercing light. Have you availed yourselves of such seasons as these for searching into 'the chambers of imagery,' and while you detected greater and greater abominations, been at the pains to bring them out and slay them before the Lord? Have such visitations effected something towards the mortification of sin? Or have they been suffered to expire in

mere ineffectual resolutions? The fruits which godly sorrow produced in the Corinthians, are thus beautifully portrayed: 'What carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what revenge!' There are moments in the experience of a good man, when he feels a more than ordinary softness of mind; the frost of selfishness dissolves, and his heart flows forth in love to God and his fellow-creatures. How careful should we be to cherish such a frame, and to embrace the opportunity of subduing resentments, and of healing those scars and wounds which it is scarcely possible to avoid in passing through this unquiet world!

"Remember, we as Christians profess a peculiar relation to God as his children, his witnesses, his people, his temple; the character of that glorious Being and of his religion will be contemplated by the world, chiefly through the medium of our spirit and conduct, which ought to display, as in a mirror, the virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. It is strictly appropriate to the subject of our present meditations, to remind you that you are 'temples.' 'For ye, says the apostle, 'are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' What purity, sanctity, and dignity may be expected in persons who bear such a character! A Christian should look upon himself as something sacred and devoted, so that what involves but an ordinary degree of criminality in others, in him partakes of the nature of sacrilege; what is a breach of trust in others, is in him the profanation of a temple. Let us watch and pray that nothing may be allowed a place in our hearts that is not suitable to the residence of the holy and blessed God. Finally, having such great and precious promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord[43]."

[43] Letter on the Work of the Spirit, by R. Hall. A.M.

LETTER XVIII.

On Justification by Faith.

HERE again, my dear friend, we enter controverted ground: and on such ground, indeed, you must expect to find me, nearly till we terminate our correspondence. This, however, does not arise from any obscurity in the subjects themselves, or from the vagueness of the terms in which they are revealed; but rather from the natural aversion of the unenlightened human mind to receive religious truth in the way God has been pleased to communicate it, and from that peculiarity of the Christian system which requires that "the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men bowed down," in order that "the Lord alone may be exalted[1]."

It is the humiliating fact, that "*all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God[2]," that renders the Christian Religion necessary. Or, in other words, it is because "by the works of the law no flesh living *can* be justified," that the new dispensation becomes requisite. If obedience be at all times our duty, in what way can present repentance release us, as some would argue, from the punishment of former transgressions? Can repentance annihilate what is past? Or can we do more, by present obedience, than acquit ourselves of present obligation? Or does the contrition we experience, added to the positive duties we discharge, constitute a surplusage of merit, which may be transferred to the reduction of our former demerit? "We may as well affirm," says a learned divine, "that our former obedience atones for our present sins, as that our present obedience makes amends for antecedent transgressions!" No man can discharge an old debt merely by taking care to incur no fresh ones: and, in like manner, since sin is a debt to Divine justice (which de-

[1] Is. ii. 11. [2] See pp. 245, 276—280.

mands undeviating rectitude and holiness), when once incurred it would not be cancelled merely by abstaining from sin in future;—supposing it were possible (which I am not inclined to admit) that sin could be entirely avoided without the aid of that restraining and invigorating principle which is implanted in the heart of a sincere believer on his conversion[3]. The question, then, to which not merely every philosophical inquirer, but every man who is interested about his eternal welfare, must be solicitous to receive a satisfactory answer is, "How shall God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly?" To this question the New Testament happily furnishes a most explicit reply. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time *Christ died for the ungodly*[4]." And how are the ungodly to avail themselves of the benefit resulting from the death of Christ? The scriptural reply is, "*by faith.*" "By him (Jesus) all who *believe* are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Being justified *freely* by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "Man is *justified by faith*, without the works of the law." "He saved us not by *works* of justification, but according to his mercy." "By grace are ye saved *through* FAITH, *not of yourselves*, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should glory." "Wherefore, being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ[5]."

Such being the main tenour of the declarations in

[3] As the due consideration of that branch of the argument which fixes the guilt of sin upon every individual, however he may have escaped all the grosser vices, would draw me too far from my present purpose, I beg to refer to ch. 5 of that valuable work, Dr. Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion," and to section 7 of the excellent Hooker's Discourse on Justification: and, for a striking proof of the practical necessity of the entire doctrine of the Trinity, to the first part of Bishop Beveridge's "Private Thoughts."

[4] Rom. v. 6.

[5] Acts, xiii. 39. Rom. iii. 24, 28. Tit. iii. 5. Eph. ii. 8, 9. Gal. ii. 16. Rom. v. 1.

the New Testament, it is no wonder that the doctrine of *justification by faith* should in all ages have obtained a very general reception, or that infidels and others should in all ages have disputed it. "You tell sinners (says Celsus) not to examine, but to believe; and their *faith* will save them;" which is just the language that it might be expected an uncandid opponent would adopt[6]. Our Reformers, whose views of most doctrinal points were remarkably clear and extensive, furnish us with abundant evidence, not of their opinions alone, but of those of much earlier writers, as to the subject before us.

"After this wise (say they) to be justified only by this true and lively faith in Christ, speak all the old and ancient authors, both Greeks and Latins; of whom we will specially rehearse three, Hilary, Basil, and Ambrose. *St. Hilary* saith these words plainly in the ninth canon upon Matthew; 'Faith only justifieth.' And *St. Basil*, a Greek author, writeth thus: 'This is a perfect and whole rejoicing in God, when a man advanceth not himself for his own righteousness, but acknowledgeth himself to lack true justice and righteousness, and to be justified by the only faith in Christ.'

"These be the very words of St. Basil; and *St. Ambrose*, a Latin author, hath these words: 'This is the ordinance of God, that they which believe in Christ shall be saved without works, by faith only, freely receiving the remission of their sins.' Consider diligently these words, 'without works, by faith only, freely we receive the remission of our sins.' What can be spoken more plainly than to say, that freely without works, by faith only we obtain remission of our sins? These, and other like sentences, that we be justified by faith only, freely, and without works, we read oft-times in the best and most ancient writers: as, beside Hilary, Basil, and Ambrose, before rehearsed, we read the same in Origen, St. Chrysostom, St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, Prosper, Oecumenius, Proclus, Bernardus,

[6] Orig. con. Cels. p. 8. Ed. 1658. Bellamy's ed. p. 67.

Anselm, and many other authors, Greek and Latin. Nevertheless, this sentence, that we be justified by faith only, is not so meant of them that the same justifying faith is alone in man, without true repentance, hope, charity, dread, and the fear of God, at any time and season. Nor when they say that we should be justified freely, do they mean that we should or might afterwards be idle, and that nothing should be required on our parts afterward: neither do they mean so to be justified without good works, that we should do no good works at all, like as shall be more expressed at large hereafter. But this saying, that we be justified by faith only, freely, and without works, is spoken to take away clearly all merit of our works, as being unable to deserve our justification at God's hands, and thereby most plainly to express the weakness of man and the goodness of God; the great infirmity of ourselves, and the might and power of God; the imperfection of our own works, and the most abundant grace of our Saviour Christ; and therefore wholly to ascribe the merit and deserving of our justification unto Christ only, and his most precious blood-shedding. This faith the holy Scripture teacheth us; this doctrine all ancient authors of Christ's church do approve; this doctrine *advanceth and setteth forth the true glory of Christ, and beateth down the vain-glory of man;* this, whosoever denieth, *is not to be accounted for a Christian man,* nor for a setter forth of Christ's glory; but for an adversary to Christ and his Gospel, and for a setter forth of men's vain-glory.

"It hath been manifestly declared unto you, that no man can fulfil the law of God; and therefore by the law all men are condemned: whereupon it followeth necessarily, that some other thing should be required for our salvation than the law; and that is, a true and lively faith in Christ, bringing forth good works, and a life according to God's commandments. You heard also the ancient authors' minds of this saying, 'Faith in Christ only justifieth man,' so plainly

declared, that you see that the very true meaning of this proposition or saying, 'We be justified by faith in Christ only,' is this: We put our faith in Christ, that we be justified by him only, that we be justified by God's free mercy, and the merits of our Saviour Christ only, and by no virtue or good works of our own that is in us, or that we can be able to have, or to do, for to deserve the same; Christ himself only being the cause meritorious thereof. Here you perceive many words to be used to avoid contention in words with them that delight to brawl about words, and also to show the true meaning to avoid evil-taking and misunderstanding; and yet peradventure all will not serve with them that be contentious; but contenders will ever forge matters of contention, even when they have no occasion thereto[7]."

And thus, as it should seem, it happens that the adversaries of the doctrine of justification by faith, some from pure ignorance, others from a love of calumny, affirm that it is a doctrine which leads to licentiousness. "But it is a childish cavil," says Hooker[8], "wherewith in the matter of justification our adversaries do so greatly please themselves, exclaiming that we tread all Christian virtues under our feet, and require nothing but faith, because we teach that faith alone justifieth; whereas, by this speech, we never meant to exclude either hope or charity from being always joined, as inseparable handmates, with faith in the man that is justified; or works from being added, as necessary duties required at the hands of every justified man:—but to show that faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ unto justification, and Christ the only garment which being so put on covereth the shame of our defiled natures, hideth the imperfection of our works, preserveth us blameless in the sight of God: before whom otherwise the weakness of our faith

[7] Homily on Salvation, pp. 20, 21, 23. Oxford ed. 1810.
[8] Discourse on Justification.

were cause sufficient to make us culpable, yea, to shut us from the kingdom of heaven."

Thus again, as Reynolds remarks, "Faith hath two properties (as a hand) *to work* and *to receive*. When faith purifies the heart, supports the drooping spirits, worketh by love, carries a man through afflictions and the like, these are the works of faith: when faith accepts of righteousness in Christ, and receives him as the gift of his Father's love, when it embraceth the promises afar off (Heb. ii. 13), and lays hold on eternal life (1 Tim. vi. 12), this is the *receiving* act of faith. Now faith justifies not by working (lest the effect should not be wholly of grace, and partly of work, Ephesians, ii. 8, 9): but by bare receiving and accepting, or yielding consent to that righteousness, which in regard of working was the righteousness of Christ (Rom. v. 18), and in regard of disposing, imputing, appropriating unto us, was the righteousness of God (Rom. iii. 21. 1 Cor. i. 30. Phil. iii. 9). To make the point of justification by the receiving, and not the working of faith, plain, let us consider it by a familiar similitude.

"Suppose a chirurgeon should perfectly cure the hand of a poor man from some desperate wound which utterly disabled him from any work; when he hath so done, should at one time freely bestow some good alms upon the man, to the receiving whereof he was enabled by the former cure; and at another time should set the man about some work, unto the which likewise the former cure had enabled him; and the work being done, should give him a reward proportionable to his labour: I demand which of these two gifts are arguments of greater grace in the man, either the recompensing of that labour which was wrought by the strength he restored, or the free bestowing of an equal gift, unto the receiving whereof likewise he himself gave ability? Any man will easily answer, that the gift was a work of more free grace than the reward, though unto both way was made, by his own merciful cure; for all the

mercy which was shown in the cure was not able to nullify the intrinsical proportion, which afterwards did arise between the work and the reward. *Now, this is the plain difference between our doctrine and the doctrine of our adversaries, in the point of justification.* They say, we are justified by grace, and yet by works, because grace enables us to work: we say *we are justified freely*, not by the works of grace, but *by the grace which bestows our justification, and therefore our strength of working unto us.* For surely God's free grace is more magnified in giving us undeservedly both righteousness and works; than in giving us works to deserve our righteousness[9]."

To decide, however, in this important inquiry, from the nature of things as revealed in Scripture, and not from any appeal to inferior authority, let us attend to three questions: What is meant by *justification?* What by *faith?* What is the genuine import of the term *justification by faith?*

I. With regard to *justification;* it manifestly in its primary sense has relation to accusation. Those who have committed no crime, or omitted no binding duty, are free from guilt, or reasonable *charge* of guilt; but may still require justification. If there be no accusation or charge brought against a person, he does not stand in need of being justified: but when he is accused of a crime of which he is entirely innocent, he thence has an opportunity of justifying himself by making his innocence appear; and his *judge* has thence an opportunity of justifying him by *pronouncing* or *declaring* publicly that he *is* innocent of the crime laid to his charge. This is justification according to its original meaning: but in this sense none can, strictly speaking, be justified, since *all* are sinners, and all are accused: for the law accuses, Satan accuses, and conscience accuses. The *law* accuses: for all are made under "the law," and "we know (says Paul) that what

Bishop Reynolds's Three Treatises, p. 483.

things soever the law saith it saith to those that are under the law; so that every mouth is stopped, and all the world becometh subject to the judgment of God[10]." So again *Satan* accuses. He is the "Prince of this world," "the adversary, the false accuser," "the accuser of the brethren, that accuses them before God day and night[11]." And farther, *conscience*, that mighty troubler of the human breast, is a frequent accuser. Paul, speaking of the Gentiles, says, "their conscience beareth witness, and their thoughts accuse or excuse one another[12]." And truly none but those who have learnt by experience can tell fully what the pangs inflicted by a guilty and awakened conscience are. A man may flee from many calamities, and bear up with dignity and patience under others; but he can no more flee from an accusing conscience than he can flee from himself. "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity: but *a wounded spirit who can bear*[13]?"

Against such accusers, retaining the primary interpretation of the word, "no flesh living can be *justified*:" so that some more appropriate acceptation of the term must be adopted. And we find that by the phrase *to justify* is often meant so to do a man right, as to pronounce sentence in his favour, to acquit him from guilt, to excuse him from burden, to liberate him from punishment, and to repute or deem him just. Thus in one of these senses "wisdom" is said to be "justified of her children:" and thus justification, in a still more extended sense, is not opposed to accusation merely, but to *condemnation*. As in the observation of Solomon,—"He that *justifieth* the wicked, and he that *condemneth* the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord:" and in the declaration of Jesus Christ, "By thy words thou shalt be *justified*, and by thy words thou shalt be *condemned*[14]."

[10] Rom. iii. 19. [11] John, xii. 31. 1 Pet. v. 8. Rev. xii. 10.
[12] Rom. ii. 15. [13] Prov. xviii. 14.
[14] Prov. xvii. 15. Matt. xii. 37.

In the evangelical acceptation of the term, as it is applied by the apostle Paul, justification is "of God," and imports his acquitting us from guilt, condemnation, and punishment, by free and full remission of our sins, *reputing* and *declaring* us just persons, and dealing with us as though we were upright and innocent in his esteem. For this apostle treats of justification as an act of judgment performed by God, by which he declares his own righteousness and justice, and at the same time our liberation from the punishment due to transgression: his justice consisting in accepting a competent satisfaction offered in lieu of the debt due to him, and in reparation of the injury done to him, by reason of which the debtor is acquitted and the offence remitted. "For now a Divine justification (saith this apostle in his Epistle to the Romans), independently of the law, is discovered, being testified by the law and the prophets; that Divine justification is extended to *all* that believe; for there is no distinction; for all having sinned, all have forfeited the praise of God: being justified of free gift by his grace through the redemption that is by Jesus Christ: whom God hath ordained to be a propitiatory through faith in his blood, for the manifestation of his rectitude, in passing over and remitting their past transgressions through Divine forbearance: to manifest, also, his rectitude at this time: that he may appear to be just, and the justifier of him who trusts in Jesus[15]." Hence, we see, that

[15] Rom. iii. 21—26. The above will, I believe, be found a correct rendering of the passage. That it is not much distorted to accord with a particular hypothesis will be evident on comparing it with the Socinian version, which is this: "Without a law, God's method of justification is manifested; being attested by the law and the prophets; even to all [and upon all] who believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; being justified of free bounty, even by his favour, through the redemption which is by Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth as a mercy-seat in his own blood: to show his method of justification concerning the remission of past sins, through the forbearance of God; to show, I say, his method of justification at this present time: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who hath faith in Jesus."

justification is a result of Christ's redemption; that remission of sins is so likewise; and that they may be considered as synonymous expressions; God demonstrating by either or both of them his justice and goodness. Justification, in fine, including, in St. Paul's view at least, *an acquittal from guilt and condemnation, and a being regarded as righteous, with "God who justifieth."*

II. I propose, in the next place, to ascertain what is the evangelical acceptation of the word *faith*, as it relates to justification. I make the inquiry with this restriction, because it is evident, as was indeed remarked by Chrysostom[16], that the word πιστις, usually rendered faith, is variously employed in Scripture. I also confine myself entirely here to the kind of faith required of those who possess the Gospel; not wishing to embarrass the question with any thing relative to such as have never had it proposed to them.

1. This faith is something more than simple belief, or that assent of the understanding, which neither affects the heart nor the conduct. For, Paul speaks of "believing in the *heart*" as essential to salvation, because "with the heart man believeth to *righteousness* or justification[17]."

2. This faith is something different from believing that the Scriptures are the word of God, and that all things contained in them are true. For this, as Dr. Doddridge remarks, is liable to a double objection; as, on the one hand, it supposes it absolutely necessary that every man should believe both the plenary inspiration, and the extent of it to *all* the books of Scripture; which, though it may admit of strong proof, can never be shown to be a thing the belief of which is *absolutely requisite to salvation:* and, on the other hand, an implicit and entire belief in this may be yielded by a mind which is grossly ignorant of, or sadly misapplies, some of the most important doctrines of Christianity.

3. This faith, in its Evangelical use, presupposes

[16] Homil. xxvi. in Epist. ad Hebræos. xi. [17] Rom. x. 9, 10.

a conviction of the corruption of our nature, a lively and painful sense of the guilt of sin, a solicitude to be delivered from it; and implies a persuasion that through the mystery of redemption "there *is* forgiveness with God, that he may be feared;" but it does not *necessarily* imply a *persuasion* that God hath remitted *our* sins: for it relates to propositions revealed by God; and God has no where declared that he has remitted *our* sins individually. He has, indeed, declared that he will pardon our transgressions, and "blot out our iniquities," if we cordially and sincerely comply with certain requisitions; but the ascertaining that we have so complied is matter of *experience*, and not of faith. When we distrust God, we want true faith; but it is possible we may possess faith, although we distrust ourselves. The observation of the wisest of men was, "Blessed is he that *feareth* always;" so feareth as to excite solicitude and watchfulness over his heart and conduct: and to render him diligent to "make his calling and election sure." The great danger is on the side of presumption, arrogance, and self-confidence, and not where lies humility, diffidence, and poverty of spirit, which God has assured us he loves.

4. Much less is that a correct notion of faith which defines it to be "a *firm and certain knowledge* of God's *eternal good will* towards *us* particularly, and that we shall be saved." For according to this a man may be tempted, as Mr. Cecil remarked, to believe that he is among the elect, because he thus holds the doctrine of election; and he must possess a certain knowledge both of his present sincerity and sanctity, and of his perseverance: and farther, if he be not *sure* he has repented and is converted, it would follow from this definition that he must be *sure he is not* converted, which would be truly perplexing and discouraging to most persons of genuine humility and lowliness of mind. "Let us beware (says Hooker) that we make not too many ways of denying Christ, or denying the

faith, lest we scarcely leave any way for ourselves truly and soundly to confess him." On this thorny position I beg to confirm my own sentiments by the authority and the arguments of Dr. Barrow. "We may consider," he says, "1. That this doctrine inverts and confounds the order of things declared in Scripture, wherein faith is set *before* obtaining God's good will, as a prerequisite condition thereto, and is made a means of salvation ('without faith it is *impossible* to please God.' 'By grace are ye saved *through faith*.') And if we must believe, before God loves us (with such a love as we speak of), and before we can be saved; then must we *know* that we believe, before we can know that God loves us, or that we shall be saved, and consequently we must indeed believe before we can know that God loves us, or that we shall be saved. But this doctrine makes the knowledge of God's love and of salvation in nature antecedent to faith, as being an essential ingredient in it; which is preposterous. Consider this circle of discourse: a man cannot know that he believes unless he does believe, this is certain; a man cannot know that he shall be saved, without knowing he doth believe; this is also certain: for upon what ground, from what evidence, can he know his salvation, but by knowing his faith? But again, backward: a man, say they, cannot believe (and consequently not know that he believes) without being assured of his salvation. What an inextricable maze and confusion is here! This doctrine, indeed, doth make the *knowledge* of a future event to be the *cause* of its being future; it supposes God to become our friend (as he was of Abraham by his faith), by our *knowing* that he is our friend; it makes us to obtain a reward, by knowing that we *shall* obtain it; it supposes the assurance of our coming to a journey's end, to be the way of getting thither; which who can conceive intelligible or true? Our Saviour doth indeed tell us, that it is *the way to life* everlasting (or conducible to the attaining it) *to know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent:* but he

doth not say it is life everlasting (or conducible to the obtaining it) to know that we *shall* have life everlasting: that were somewhat strange to say. St. Peter exhorts us to *use diligence to make our calling and election sure*, or firm and stable: but he doth not bid us to know it to be sure. If we did know it to be so, what need should we have to *make* it so? yea, how could we make it so? He doth not enjoin us to be sure of it in our opinion, but to secure it in the event by sincere obedience and a holy life; and by so impressing this persuasion upon our minds, so rooting the love of God and his truth in our hearts, that no temptation may be able to subvert our faith, or to pluck out our charity.

"2. This notion plainly supposes the truth of that doctrine, that no man, being once in God's favour, can ever quite lose it, yet is thereby everted: for it follows thence that no man, who doth not assent to that doctrine, is, or can be, a believer; for he that is not assured of the truth of that opinion (although we suppose him assured of his own sincerity, and being in a state of grace), cannot know that he shall be saved; so that only such as agree with them in that opinion can be *believers*, which is somewhat hard, or rather very absurd. And, to aggravate this inconvenience, I adjoin, 3. That, according to their notion, scarce any man (except some have had an especial revelation concerning their salvation), before the late alterations in Christendom, was a believer; for before that time it hardly appears that any man did believe, as they do, that a man cannot fall from grace; and therefore scarce any man could be always assured that he should be saved; and therefore scarce any man could be a believer in their sense[18]." To these observations I have only to add, that faith, according to this interpretation of it, leaves no room for the exercise of *hope*; and since, as we have seen it necessarily classes the humble Christian, who is conscious that "the heart is deceitful above

[18] Barrow's first Sermon on Justifying Faith.

all things," and is therefore "working out his own salvation with *fear and trembling*," among unbelievers, it stifles *charity*; and thus banishes two out of the three associate Christian graces.

3. True faith, which is "Christianity in Consent," implies acts of mind, acts of will, and subjection of conduct. It is called "*faith in Christ*," and includes not merely belief in Christianity, belief in Jesus as the Messiah; but a *practical* assent to all that the Gospel reveals concerning him, an inward conviction and a full persuasion of his all-sufficiency, in his complex character, to suffer and die, to rise and save, to fulfil every thing that was necessary for a Mediator, in order to reconcile guilty creatures to an offended God; and consequently an entire resigning of our souls to him for salvation in his appointed way. It is also termed "faith in the *name* of Christ," "faith in his blood," "faith in his *righteousness*[19]," implying an acknowledgment of worthlessness and insufficiency in ourselves, and a depending on what the Saviour has done and suffered for our pardon and acceptance. It farther includes "coming to Christ" in the way of his commandments, and a firm and *prevailing* resolution of sincere obedience, such as, though it may unhappily be sometimes precipitated by temptation into sinful *actions*, does not, dare not, fall into a sinful *course*; but manifests itself in a "purified" heart, a "sanctified" conduct, and exalted attainments in "righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith[20]."

With regard to this true faith, it has justly been observed, that "the words πιστις and πιστευω, which continually return upon us in reading the Greek Testament, should be frequently translated by *trust and trusting* in God, or Christ, especially where the preposition εν or εις is added to it: and it should not be so often called belief or believing; for it is not such a *mere assent* to the Gospel of Christ as excites hope or trust

[19] John, i. 12. Rom. iii. 25. Col. i. 20. 2 Pet. i. 1.
[20] Rom. ix. 30.

in mercy, and so draws forth the soul to love God, repent of sin, and fulfil the duties of holiness.

"The Hebrew words, which, in the Old Testament, imply trust and dependance, are represented often by πιστευω in the New Testament, as well as those which signify belief or assent. And therefore David, in the Psalms, where he expresses the inward actings of his soul towards God, is ever using the words *trust* and *hope;* and the translators of the New Testament should have much oftener used them to express the true meaning of the words πιστις and πιστευω in the sacred writers. As John, xiv. 1, 'Ye *trust* in God, *trust* also in me.' Acts, xvi. 31, '*Trust* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Mark vi. 22, 'Have *trust* in God.' Acts, xx. 21, 'Repentance towards God, and *trust* in our Lord Jesus Christ;' and many other places. This is the constant sentiment of our Protestant divines in their opposition to the Papists, that *fides* est *fiducia*[21]."

Fully accordant with this is the language of the principal divines who adorned the purest ages of British theology, as the authors of the Homilies, of the Westminster Confession, &c. The latter, for example, say, "By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true, whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein, and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are *accepting, receiving,* and *resting upon Christ alone,* for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace."

In the same spirit, *Manton* treats the subject, in his Commentary. "Thou believest, that is, assentest to this truth; the lowest act of faith is invested with the name of believing. Bare assent to the articles of religion doth not infer true faith. True faith uniteth to Christ, 'tis conversant about his person; 'tis not only

[21] Watts's Harmony of all Religions, ch. viii.

assensus axiomati, an assent to a gospel maxim, or proposition; you are not justified by that, but being one with Christ. 'Twas the mistake of the former age to make *the promise* rather than *the person of Christ*, to be the formal object of faith; the promise is the warrant, Christ the object: therefore the work of faith is terminated on him in the expressions of Scripture. We read of coming to him, receiving him, &c. We cannot close with Christ without a promise; and we must not close with a promise without Christ. In short, there is not only an assent in faith, but consent; *not only an assent to the truth of the word, but a consent to take Christ.* Well, then, do not mistake a naked illumination or some general acknowledgment of the articles of religion for faith; a man may be right in opinion and judgment, but of vile affections; and a carnal Christian is in as great danger as a pagan, or idolater, or heretic; for though his judgment be sound, yet his manners are heterodox and heretical. *True believing is not an act of the understanding, but a work of all the heart.*"

Lastly, with respect to true faith, it may be remarked that, though good works are distinct from it, so distinct, indeed, that they are frequently opposed: though they do not give value to it, but *it* renders *them* acceptable; yet they always accompany it as its peculiar fruit and genuine effect: proceeding as naturally from it as water flows from a fountain, or light emanates from the sun[22]. They are also the touchstone of faith, its evidence and measure. Faith itself is unseen, being seated in the heart; but holiness and good works, where life is continued, bring it forth to public view, and make it tend to public benefit. Where there is

[22] "The fruits of faith (says Bishop Hall) are good works; whether inward, within the roof of the heart, as love, awe, sorrow, piety, zeal, joy, and the rest; or outwards towards God, or our brethren: obedience and service to the one; to the other, relief and beneficence; these he bears in his time; sometimes all, but always some." See also Baxter's Paraphrase on Luke, xxiii. 43.

much faith, much will be produced; where there is but little faith, there will be proportionally little holiness; and where there is no faith, no "fruit" is to be expected. Hence, hypocrites and men of spurious faith are described as "clouds without water, carried aside by winds: trees whose fruit withereth, *barren,* twice dead, plucked up by the roots[23]."

III. Let us now proceed to inquire what is the evangelical interpretation of *Justification by faith?* How, according to the scheme developed in the Christian dispensation, is a man to obtain the blessing of justification, when he seeks it at first, or when, through his frailty or unfaithfulness, he needs a renewal of it? The correct answer, I apprehend, is, that he is to seek it with sole recourse to God in Christ through the medium of faith, and to look entirely off himself to the fountain of grace for mercy. This is not the meritorious but the *appointed* condition, by reason of which, through the riches of Divine mercy, "a mutual transfer is made of the sins of men to Christ, and of Christ's righteousness to men[24]." But man needs a righteousness *imparted* as well as a righteousness *imputed;* he therefore goes to God that he may possess a "meetness" as well as a title for heaven; he goes that he may be "quickened," and when so quickened he will be *another man* in God's reckoning (who cannot be supposed not duly to estimate his creatures according to what he has made them to be), and generally, though not always, in his own conscious feeling. God, as I have seen it somewhere admirably expressed, "will admit him into spiritual life wholly for Christ's sake;—but he will esteem him *spiritually alive* only in consequence of his own gift of *living faith.* And he makes this living faith the *exclusive test,* because this alone is the vitalizing tie; every thing else lives by this,—but this lives through God alone."

[23] Jude, 12.

[24] This is the language of Dr. Tomline. In reference to which, however, the distinction in note 39, p. 295, must be cautiously applied.

The inspired writers of the New Testament consider man as he really is, that is, both as *guilty* and *depraved;* and they make us acquainted with the remedies God has graciously provided both for our guilt and our depravity. They assure us that on the exercise of a lively faith we are justified from former sins, and brought into a state of acceptance with God, by virtue of the *atonement:* "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin;" and to meet our wants in the second case, or, as theological writers frequently designate it, "to preserve us in a *state* of justification," we are promised the aids of the Spirit to renew the heart, and effectually lead us on to the performance of duty; this also being promised as a consequence of true faith. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us[25]."

Now, the mind must be strangely constructed, that, in all this, can detect any thing like a tendency to licentiousness. For, while faith is inculcated as a medium of justification, good works are equally enforced as the necessary concomitants, and only genuine evidence (to men) of true faith. Besides, it must not be forgotten, that though by justification we are freed from punishment, and brought into a state of acceptance, yet, as the justification described by Paul is a state without degrees, it does not, nor ever was intended to, furnish the measure of the degrees of future happiness. Though we are brought into a state of justification, independently of good works; yet the degrees of future happiness will be graciously apportioned to "our works of faith and labours of love," performed subsequently to "the renewal of our minds" by Divine influences: while even in the present life, the more faith a man hath, the more *true* enjoyment he hath of surrounding blessings, the more patience to sustain evils, the more certain and numerous his victories over spiritual enemies, the more communion

[25] Rom. v. 1, 5.

with Christ and insight into his mysteries, the more tranquillity under occasional spiritual desertions, the more hope and joy and peace, in his daily course. Hence it is that we are exhorted to "grow in grace," to "press forward" to more exalted attainments, to be more and more "transformed into the image of God;" that we may here live fully under the privileges and immunities of men truly free; and in due time obtain a larger portion of that "blessing of the dead who die in the Lord, who rest from their labours, and their *works* do follow them[26]."

I cannot close this letter without adverting to the supposed collision of sentiments between the apostles Paul and James, as to the matter of justification.

In investigating these, and other such passages in the Scriptures which seem to be at variance, one principle will usually harmonize them. "If one thing is said to be always *connected* with salvation, and the *absence* of another is said to *exclude* from salvation, then *the existence of the one must necessarily imply the existence of the other.*" If, for example, salvation is impossible without faith, and if salvation is absolutely promised to love, then the existence of one of these implies the existence of the other. "They cannot," as Mr. Carson correctly affirms, "exist separately. Faith cannot exist without producing love, and love can spring from no other principle than faith." On this principle the beatitudes in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount are to be explained. "It is not correct to say, that the characters there described, *if they have faith, and are born again*, will be saved. Persons of such a character *have* faith, and *are* born again." "The principle of reconciliation between Paul and James," Mr. Carson also observes, with equal clearness, "appears to be, that Paul speaks of that by which a man is *constituted just*, James of that which proves him to be so. The whole strain of James's reasoning proceeds on this view. Thus was Abraham justified by offering his son. This was the evidence

[26] Rev. xiv. 13.

that proved him just. In like manner, we speak of a man as being justified by his witnesses, on the testimony alleged in his favour. Paul, on the other hand, declares Abraham justified by believing God. By this he was *constituted* just. James says, 'Seest thou how faith wrought with his works?' Is not this an appeal to evidence? Does not this imply that the apostle is speaking of works as justifying Abraham by their testimony[27]?"

On the whole, you will now, I trust, perceive in what way it is that "faith *establishes* the law," and that those who reject the mode of justification by faith do in reality "make void the law." You will see, too, that there is no erecting a system of justification through the conjoined efficacy of faith and works. Your submission to the way of God's appointment must be complete without reservation, or self-dependance. "By grace are ye saved *through faith*, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; *not of works*, lest any man should boast:" yet, on the other hand, it is not without holiness; for "*without holiness no man shall see the Lord*[28]." Be careful, then, my friend, that your faith be genuine and efficacious, that it "work by love," that it "purify the heart," that it "preserve from temptation," that it "overcome the world," that it cherish humility, watchfulness, and self-examination. "For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man try his own work; and then he will have glorying in himself alone, and not in another." "Be not deceived, God is not deluded; for whatsoever a man soweth, that he will reap also. For he who soweth to his flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; but he who soweth *to the Spirit*, from the Spirit will reap everlasting life. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due time we shall reap, if we faint not[29]."

[27] Carson's Principles of Biblical Interpretation, p. 140. See also Hooker on Justification, § 6, 20, 21. Granville Penn's Annotations, Rom. iii. 29.

[28] Heb. xii. 14. [29] Gal. vi. 3—9.

LETTER XIX.

On Providence.

ALTHOUGH great confusion and uncertainty were evinced in the notions both of the vulgar and the philosophic ancient Pagans, with regard to the unceasing superintending providence of one or more superior beings; yet there were but few among them that positively and constantly denied that doctrine in every sense. Several of them doubted it in *some* of their speculations; others fancied that the Deity, by intermeddling with human concerns, would degrade and pollute himself; but scarcely any of them *ridiculed* the notion, while some reasoned forcibly in favour of it, and derived from it consolation and delight. Thus Thales, of Miletus, taught that the world was the work of God, and that God sees and directs the most secret thoughts in the heart of man. Simplicius, the celebrated commentator on Aristotle, argued that if God do not look to the affairs of the world, it is either because he cannot, or will not: the first (said he) is absurd, since to govern cannot be difficult, where to create was easy; and the latter is most absurd and blasphemous. Theon, of Alexandria, taught that a full persuasion of God's seeing every thing we do is the strongest incentive to virtue; and represented this belief concerning the Deity as productive of the greatest pleasure imaginable, especially to the virtuous, who might depend with the greater confidence on the favour and protection of Providence: he recommended nothing so much as meditation on the presence of God; and he advised the civil magistrate, by way of restraint on such as were profane and wicked, to place in large characters at the corner of every street, this inscription—GOD SEES THEE, O SINNER! That great heathen emperor and philosopher, Marcus Antoninus, fully persuaded of the existence and government of God, maintained that the best thing for a man is that which God sends him, and

the best time that when he sends it: and so far was he from adopting the comfortless system now propagated by many professing Christians, as well as infidels, that notwithstanding he governed the greatest of all empires in the deepest calm, and commanded all the enjoyments that splendour, wealth, and regal dignity could furnish, even to a well-ordered mind, he still exclaimed, "*What would it concern* ME *to live in a world void of God and without* PROVIDENCE!"*

How lamentable is the contrast between the sentiments of these heathens, immersed as they were in the grossest ignorance as to the essentials of religious truth, and those of the many who, though enjoying the full blaze of scientific and religious knowledge in a Christian country, ridicule this consoling doctrine. How strange, that while, conformably with the wise observation of Lord Bacon, "it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, *rest in providence*, and turn upon the poles of truth[1]," there should be found men of ingenuity and literature, who dazzle by their talents, yet will boldly affirm "that the doctrine of the immediate and perpetual interference of Divine Providence *is not true*,"—and insinuate that it is "ridiculous, degrading," and dangerous[2].

In opposition to the assertion just quoted, I will venture to declare, and hope I shall be able to prove, that the doctrine of the *particular*, as well as that of the *universal*, providence of God, is revealed clearly in Scripture, is confirmed by history, and is compatible with the established principles of philosophy.

Now, that the persuasion that the providence of God extended to all times and places, and to every individual, was prevalent among the primitive Christians, is evident from the language of CÆCILIUS, a Roman lawyer, and then one of the most skilful opposers of the truth, though he became a convert to it by reason of his controversy with Octavius. He objected

[1] Lord Bacon's Essay on Truth.

[2] Edinburgh Review, vol. xi. pp. 356, 357.

against them that they asserted "a providence as extending to the affairs and actions of men, and even to their most secret thoughts." He represented it as very absurd in them to believe that "their God, whom they can neither see nor show, inspects diligently into the manners of all men, into their actions, and even their words and hidden thoughts; and that he is every where present, troublesome, and impertinently busy and curious; since he interests himself in all things that are done, and thrusts himself into all places; whereas he can neither attend to every particular whilst he is employed about the whole, nor be able to take care of the whole, being occupied about particulars[3]."

Let me next select two or three passages to show that this notion of the early Christians was derived from the Bible. From the Old Testament I first quote part of the language of God to *Job*, in which he asserts not only his power, but his providence. "Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters? or a way for the lightning of thunder, to cause it to rain on the earth? to satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of the dew? Who provideth for the raven his food[4]?"

David abounds with references to the providence of God. "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. The Lord preserveth all them that love him; but all the wicked will he destroy." "The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous. The Lord preserveth the strangers; He relieveth the fatherless and the widow; but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down." "He prepareth rain for the earth, he maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

[3] Min. Fel. p. 15. Edit. var. 1762.
[4] Job, xxxviii. 25—27, 41.

He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry[5]."

Again, the prophet Ezekiel, in one of his delightful parables, where he describes the security, prosperity, and universality of the Messiah's kingdom, under the metaphor of a flourishing "branch," concludes by a forcible declaration of the minuteness as well as the extent of God's providence, still keeping up his allusion:—"And all the trees of the field shall know that I, THE LORD, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I, the Lord, have spoken, and have done it[6]."

Since, then, the Divine Being is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," without "variableness or shadow of turning[7]," and since his providence was constantly and universally manifested in the times of Moses, Job, David, Daniel, and Ezekiel; it would be absurd to imagine that it should now, or at any time, become dormant or partially evinced. But we need not stop here. The proofs from the New Testament might be extracted from almost every page. A *few* of them only I shall request you to consult on the present occasion. For declarations of the extent and universality of Providence, read Matt. vi. 19—34; x. 29—31. Luke, xii. 6, 7, 22—31. That all things are fixed under its conduct, is declared in Acts, xvii. 26. Our entire dependence upon Providence is taught in James, iv. 13—17. And that it is most remarkably manifested in the care of good men, may be learnt from Acts, xxiii. 17—32; xxv. 4, 21—27; xxvi. 21, 22, 32. That we owe every thing which is conducive to life and piety to God's providence, is taught by Peter, 2 Epis. i. 3; and by Paul in numerous places.

Indeed, the connexion established between piety and prayer, on which its growth depends, and the acknow-

[5] Ps. cxlv. 15, 16, 20; cxlvi. 8, 9; cxlvii. 8, 9.

[6] Ezek. xvii. 24. See also Prov. xvi. 33. Dan. v. 29. Deut. xxxii. 39; and 1 Sam. ii. 6—9.

[7] Heb. xiii. 8. James, i. 17.

ledgment of a particular providence included in the performance of prayer, must with all considerate persons be decisive on this point. We are exhorted to "pray with the spirit, and the understanding also," to "pray without ceasing," to "ask that we may receive," to "seek that we may find," to "knock that it may be opened to us:" we are told that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" that God "hears and *answers* prayer;" that "all things whatsoever we ask in prayer, *believing*, we shall receive[8]," &c. But unless the Supreme Being holds constant intercourse with his creatures; unless, as the Psalmist expresses it, "his ear is always open to their cry," and "his hand" ready to be "stretched out" to assist those who trust in him, prayer is an absurdity: and Jesus and his apostles, in exhorting us to frequency and fervency in prayer, trifled with our wants and distresses, and urged us to render ourselves ridiculous by an indulgence in solemn mummery. Prayer obviously implies God's universal agency; that he is able to attend to the separate wants of each individual among the millions of his creatures, and ready to furnish his providential supplies as they are needed, and where they are solicited with a proper spirit.

James, after assuring us that the "fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," informs us that *Elias* was a man, subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." We also learn from the Pentateuch that, when God in his anger sent fire among the Israelites which consumed even "in the uttermost part of the camp," the people cried unto Moses: and when *Moses* "prayed unto the Lord, *the fire was quenched*[9]." Now on both these occasions the interposition of Providence was vouchsafed in answer

[8] 1 Cor. xiv. 15. Rom. v. 17. Matt. vii. 7. Luke, xviii. 1. Matt. xxi. 22, &c.

[9] James, v. 16—18. 1 Kings, xvii. 1; xviii. 42—45. Num. xi. 2.

to prayer. We have here nothing to do with the reason of the connexion subsisting between prayer and the providential supply of blessings or removal of calamity; but with the fact that such connexion does subsist, and with the promise that such connexion always will subsist: for this fact and this promise being incontrovertible, it is equally incontrovertible, that the providence of God reaches to all persons and things; their comparative insignificance or grandeur in our estimation forming no scale for him; but all and each being dealt with according to the rules of matchless wisdom, righteousness, and mercy.

The doctrine of a particular or special providence is, therefore, a doctrine of Scripture: and that it is confirmed by history is strikingly manifest. Thus the history of revealed religion is in truth the history of Providence. Trace, for example, the stories of Joseph[10], of David, or of Jeroboam. Men usually assign no cause for the conveyance of Joseph into Egypt, but the envy of his brethren; for Shimei's reviling David, but his base malignity; for David's success against Goliath, but his skill in using the sling; for his numbering the people, but his ridiculous pride; for Jeroboam's revolt, but his unruly ambition. Yet, if you look beyond the surface, you will find that these were foreseen, and, if I may so say, *projected* into their re-

[10] The case of Joseph seems too interesting, considering how the existence of the family of Jacob was involved in it, to be passed over with a mere allusion. If we endeavour to trace the independent particulars, which concurred, and served as steps in Providence to ensure the advancement of Joseph to his dignity in Egypt, we shall find that they amount to at least thirteen or fourteen. There were, 1. His father's partiality. 2. The hatred of his brethren. 3. His being sent to them by his father. 4. The relentings of Reuben and Judah. 5. The opportune passing by of the Midianite merchants. 6. His being sold to Potiphar. 7. The wickedness of Potiphar's wife. 8. Joseph's virtuous resistance. 9. The favour of the keeper of the prison into which Joseph was thrown. 10. The circumstance of the simultaneous imprisonment, in the same prison, of Pharaoh's butler and baker. 11. Their dreams, and Joseph's correct interpretation of them. 12. Pharaoh's extraordinary dreams. 13. The

spective places, for the most important purposes. Fix your attention for a moment upon the case of David. It was the intention of Providence to place him upon the throne of the Hebrews. The country is invaded by a foreign enemy: the hostile armies meet, and lie encamped upon opposite mountains. A man comes forth from the army of the invaders, as was extremely common in those times, and defies the Hebrew host to send forth a champion to meet him in single combat. Terrified by the gigantic bulk and mighty force of Goliath, no man would risk the unequal conflict. David, who was too young to carry arms, had been sent to the camp with provisions for his brothers, and heard the challenge. In defence of his flock he had killed some beasts of prey in the wilderness, and he was an excellent marksman with the sling. He thought it might probably be as easy to kill a man as a wild beast; at all events he knew that a stone well directed would prove no less fatal to a giant than to a dwarf: he therefore resolved to try his skill, and he tried it with success. Here no man's free-will was interrupted, and no miracle was accomplished; yet, by this *train* of circumstances thus *brought* together, a foundation was laid for the future fortunes of the son of Jesse, for the greatness of his country, and for accomplishing the purposes of Providence.

Observe, again, the chain of events which led to the birth of Christ, and fixed the place where he was born.

failure of the Egyptian wise men in their attempts to interpret them. 14. Joseph's successful interpretation of both. The failure of any one link in this chain involves, evidently, the failure of the ultimate result. And thus we see, as the excellent Flavell has remarked, "that there certainly are strong combinations of persons and things, to bring about some issue and design for the benefit of the church, which themselves never thought of: they hold no intelligence, communicate not their counsels to each other, yet meet together and work together as if they did; which is, as if ten men should all meet together at one place and in one hour, about one and the same business, and that without any fore-appointment betwixt themselves; can any question but such a meeting of means and instruments are certainly, though secretly, overruled by some wise invisible agent?"

They related to individuals who, in human reckoning, were amongst the most mean and ignoble; and yet upon these persons, their concerns, their journeyings, their tarryings, hung the destinies of thousands and tens of thousands in every age. In truth, whether we are able to trace the connexion, or not, the histories of the church and of the world are interwoven throughout; and He who superintends and adjusts the whole, causes what we should, perhaps, regard as the minutest incidents, to occur precisely in the time and place where they shall be most subservient to His noblest purposes as Creator, Ruler, Benefactor, and Father.

Hence we sometimes trace in civil history the dependence of momentous concerns upon mere trifles. The bare sight of a fig, shown in the senate-house at Rome, occasioned the destruction of Carthage[11]. A few boughs of trees, carried by soldiers from Birnam Wood to Dunsinane[12], produced the terror and discomfiture of Macbeth, by which even-handed "justice" commended

> "The ingredients of his poison'd chalice
> To his own lips."

The accidental finding of a dropped letter led to the detection and prevention of the "Gunpowder-plot." These and other *apparent* accidents are not the offspring of chance, but result from the silent operation of God's providence, which "doth not hurry along like an impetuous rumbling torrent; but glideth on as a smooth and still current, with an irresistible but imperceptible force, carrying things down therewith: without much ado, without any clatter, by a nod of his head, by a whisper of his mouth, by a turn of his hand, he doth effect his purposes: winding up a close spring, he setteth the greatest wheels in motion; and thrusting in an insensible spoke, he stoppeth the greatest wheels in

[11] Quod non Trebia, aut Trasymenus, non Cannæ busto insignes Romani nominis perficere potuere; non Castra Punica ad tertium lapidem vallata, portæque; Collinæ adequitans ipse Hannibal. Plin.

[12] Heylin's Cosmography, p. 272.

their career: injecting a thought, exciting a humour, presenting an occasion, insinuating a petty accident, he bringeth about the most notable events[13]."

Nor is all this in any respect incompatible with the received principles of natural philosophy, but, as I conceive, perfectly consistent with them. From the train of argument suggested near the commencement of my first letter, you would see that it is a necessary consequence of the creation of the world, that both it, and every creature in it, only continues in existence through the constant energy of the power which created; that is, supposing the world to be created from nothing,—the hypothesis usually entertained. But if we assume the hypothesis most favourable to the sentiments of those who deny the incessant operation of Providence, and say that matter always existed, we shall not thence supersede the necessity of providential superintendence and control. For, from many experiments made in the course of the last century, it is highly probable, nay, it is certain, that the particles which constitute even the most solid bodies, are not *all* in contact; yet that a very considerable force is required to separate farther from each other the parts of a mass of wood, iron, or stone. It also appears that great force is requisite to bring bodies, however small, or highly polished, into *apparent* contact; whence they must be kept asunder by some extraneous power. So that the cohesive force by which the moleculæ of matter are retained together, as well as the repulsive force by which they are kept at certain distances, demonstrates, with regard to every body in the universe, animate or inanimate, that the immediate and perpetual agency of something that is not matter, is necessary to preserve them in the state in which they now appear. So again it has been shown[14] that from all action of body upon body motion is impaired, and the quantity of it constantly decaying in the universe. Hence, since matter

[13] Barrow on the Unsearchableness of God's Judgments.

[14] Newton's Optics, pp. 373, 375. 4th ed.

cannot re-excite the motion in itself, it follows that as an immaterial power first impressed motion on matter, so it still reproduces the motion lost, and makes up the decays sustained. Also, since the forms and motions of bodies are sustained, and in all of them an end is thus pursued, a law obeyed, wise purposes evinced and accomplished, the power which is constantly operating to effect all this, must be combined with intelligence; and what can be every where and at all times thus exhibiting power and intelligence but God, either immediately or by his subordinate instruments?

But it may still be asked, and indeed *has* been asked, can there be a particular providence, a providence that suits the several cases and prayers of individuals, without a continual repetition of miracles, or without frequent infringements upon the laws of nature and the freedom of intelligent agents? This question may safely be answered in the affirmative; and I cannot do better than lay before you some of the reasons for so answering it, as they have been stated by the ingenious author of "The Religion of Nature delineated."

"1. It seems to me not *impossible*, that God should know *what is to come:* on the contrary, it is highly reasonable to think that he does and must know things *future*. Whatever happens in the world, which does not come immediately from Him, must either be the effect of *mechanical* causes, or of the motions of living beings and *free* agents. For *chance*, we have seen already, is no cause. Now as to the former, it cannot be *impossible* for Him, upon whom the being and nature of every thing depends, and who therefore must *intimately* know all their powers, and what effects they will have, to see through the whole *train* of causes and effects, and whatever will come to pass in *that way:* nay, it is *impossible* that He should *not* do it. We ourselves, if we are satisfied of the goodness of the materials of which a machine is made, and understand the force and determination of those powers by which it is moved, can tell what it will do, or what will be the

effect of it. And as to those things which depend upon the *voluntary* motions of free agents, it is well known, that men (by whom learn how to judge of the rest) can only be free with respect to such things as are within their *sphere;* not great, God knows: and their freedom with respect to these can only consist in a liberty either to act, without any incumbent necessity, as their *own reason* and judgment shall determine them; or to *neglect* their rational faculties, and not use them at all, but suffer themselves to be carried away by the tendencies and inclinations of the body, which left thus to itself acts in a manner *mechanically*. Now He, who knows what *is* in men's power, what not, knows the make of their bodies,, and all the *mechanism* and propensions of them; knows the *nature* and *extent* of their understandings, and what will determine them this or that way; knows all the process of natural (or second) causes, and consequently how these may work upon them: He, I say, who knows all this, may know *what* men will do, if he can but know this one thing more, *viz.* whether they *will use* their rational faculties or *not.* And since even we ourselves, mean and defective as we are, can *in some measure* conceive, how so much as this may be done, and seem to want but one step to finish the account, can we with any show of reason deny to a *Perfect* Being this one article more, or think that he cannot do that too; especially if we call to mind, that this very power of using our own faculties is held of Him?

" 2. *Future*, or what to us is future, may as truly be the object of Divine knowledge as *present* is of ours: nor can we tell, what respect *past, present, to come,* have to the Divine mind, or wherein they differ. To deaf men there is no such thing as *sound*, to blind; no such thing as *light* or *colour:* nor, when these things are defined and explained to them in the best manner which their circumstances admit, are they capable of knowing *how* they are apprehended. So here we cannot tell *how* future things are known, perhaps, any more than deaf or blind people what sounds or colours are,

and *how* they are perceived; but yet there may be a way of knowing *those*, as well as there is of perceiving *these*. As they want a *fifth* sense to perceive sounds or colours, of which they have no notion; so perhaps we may want a *sixth* sense, or *some faculty*, of which future events may be the proper objects. Nor have we any more reason to deny, that there is in nature *such* a sense or faculty, than the deaf or blind have to deny there is such a sense as that of *hearing* or *seeing*.

"In the last place, this knowledge is not only not *impossible*, but that which has been already proved concerning the Deity and His perfection doth necessarily infer that nothing can be hid from Him. For if *ignorance* be an imperfection, the ignorance of *future* acts and events must be so: and then if *all* imperfections are to be denied of Him, *this must*.

"There is indeed a common prejudice against the *prescience* (as it is usually called) of God; which suggests, that if God foreknows things, He foreknows them infallibly or *certainly*: and if so, then they are *certain*; and if certain, then they are no longer matter of *freedom*. And thus prescience and freedom are inconsistent. *But sure* the nature of a thing is not *changed* by being known, or known beforehand. For if it is known truly, it is known to be what it is; and therefore is not altered by this. The truth is, God foresees, or rather sees the actions of free agents, because they *will be*; not that they will be, because He *foresees* them.

"In a word, it involves no *contradiction* to assert, that God certainly knows what any man will choose; and therefore that he should do this cannot be said to be *impossible*.

"It is not *impossible*, that such *laws* of nature, and such a *series* of causes and effects may be *originally* designed, that not only general provisions may be made for the several species of beings; but even *particular cases*, at least many of them, may also be provided for without *innovations* or *alterations* in the course of nature. It is true this amounts to a prodigious scheme,

in which all things to come are as it were comprehended under one view, estimated, and laid together; but when I consider what a mass of *wonders* the universe is in other regards; what a Being God is, *incomprehensibly* great and perfect; that he cannot be ignorant of any thing, no, not of the *future* wants and deportments of *particular* men; and that all things, which derive from Him as the First cause, must do this so as to be *consistent* one with another, and in such a manner, as to make *one compact* system, befitting so great an Author: I say, when I consider this, I cannot deny such an *adjustment* of things to be within his power. The order of events proceeding from the settlement of nature, may be as compatible with the due and reasonable success of *my* endeavours and prayers (as inconsiderable a part of the world as I am) as with any thing or *phenomenon* how *great* soever.

"Perhaps my meaning may be made more intelligible thus. Suppose M (some man) certainly to *foreknow* some way or other that when he should come to be upon his death-bed, L would *petition* for some *particular legacy*, in a manner so earnest and humble, and with such a good disposition, as would render it proper to grant his request: and upon this M makes his *last will*, by which he devises to L that which was to be asked, and then locks up the *will*; and all this many years before the death of M, and whilst L had yet no expectation or thought of any such thing. When the time comes, the *petition* is made, and *granted*; not by making any *new* will, but by the *old* one already made, and without *alteration*: which legacy had, notwithstanding that, never been left had the petition never been preferred. The grant may be called an effect of a future act, and depends as much upon it, as if it had been made after the act. So if it had been foreseen, that L would not *so much as ask*, and had therefore been left out of the will, this *preterition* would have been caused by his carriage, though much later than the date of the will. In all this is nothing hard to be

admitted, if M be allowed to *foreknow* the case. And thus the *prayers*, which good men offer to the *All-knowing* God, and the *neglects* of others, may find fitting effects *already* forecasted in the course of nature. Which *possibility* may be extended to the labours of men, and their behaviour in general.

"3. It is not *impossible*, that men, whose natures and actions are foreknown, may be introduced into the world in such *times*, *places*, and other *circumstances*, as that their acts and behaviour may not only coincide with the *general* plan of things, but also answer many *private* cases too. The *planets* and bigger parts of the world we cannot but see are disposed into such *places* and *order*, that they together make a noble *system*, without having their natural powers of attraction (or the force of that which is equivalent to attraction), or any of the laws of motion, *restrained* or *altered*. On the contrary, being *rightly placed*, they by the observation of *these* become subservient to the main design. Now why may there not be in the Divine mind something like a projection of the *future history* of mankind, as well as of the order, and motions, and various aspects of the greater bodies of the world? And then why should it not be thought *possible* for *men*, as well as for *them*, by some secret law, though of another kind, or rather by the presidence and guidance of an unseen governing power, to be brought into their places in such a manner as that by the *free* use of their faculties, the conjunctions and oppositions of their interests and inclinations, the natural influence and weight of their several magnitudes and degrees of parts, power, wealth, &c. they may conspire to make out the scheme? And then again, since generals consist of particulars, and in this scheme are comprehended the actions and cases of *particular* men, they cannot be so situated respectively among the rest of their species as to be serviceable to the principal intention, and fall properly into the *general diagram* of affairs, unless they and their several actings and cases do in the main correspond

one to another, and fit among themselves, or at least are not *inconsistent*.

"4. It is not *impossible* (for this is *all* that I contend for here), that many things, suitable to several cases, may be brought to pass by means of *secret* and sometimes *sudden influences* on our minds, or the minds of other men, whose acts may affect us. For instance, if the case should require, that N should be delivered from some threatening *ruin*, or from some *misfortune*, which should certainly befall him, if he should go such a way at such a time, as he intended: upon this occasion some *new* reasons may be presented to his mind, why he should not go *at all*, or not *then*, or not *by that road*; or he may forget to go. Or, if he is to be delivered from some dangerous *enemy*, either some new turn given to his thoughts may divert him from going where the *enemy* will be, or the enemy may be after the same manner diverted from coming where *he* shall be, or his (the enemy's) resentment may be *qualified*, or some proper method of *defence* may be suggested, or degree of resolution and vigour excited. After the same manner, not only deliverances from dangers and troubles, but advantages and successes may be conferred: or, on the one side, men may, by way of punishment for crimes committed, incur mischiefs and calamities. I say, these things and such like *may be*. For the operations of the mind following in great measure the present disposition of the *body*, some thoughts and designs, or absences of mind, may proceed from *corporeal* causes, acting according to the common laws of matter and motion themselves; and so the case may fall in with n. 2: or they may be occasioned by something said or done by *other men*; and then the case may be brought under n. 3: or they may be caused by the suggestion, and impulse, or other silent communications of some *spiritual being*; perhaps the Deity himself. For that such imperceptible influences and still whispers may be, none of us all can positively deny: that is, we cannot know certainly, that there are no

such things. On the contrary, I believe there are but few who have made observations upon themselves and their affairs, but must, when they reflect on life past, and the various adventures and events in it, find many instances, in which their usual judgment and sense of things cannot but seem to themselves to have been *overruled* they know not *by what*, nor *how*, nor *why* (i. e. they have done things, which afterwards they wonder how they came *to do)*; and that these actions have had consequences very *remarkable* in their history: I speak not here of men dementated with wine, or enchanted with some temptation: the thing holds true of men even in their sober and more considering seasons.

"That there may be *possibly* such inspirations of new thoughts and counsels may perhaps farther appear from this: that we so frequently find thoughts rising in our heads into which we are led by *no* discourse, *nothing* we read, *no* clue of reasoning; but they surprise and come upon us from we *know not* what quarter. If they proceeded from the mobility of spirits, straggling out of order, and fortuitous affections of the brain, or were of the nature of *dreams*, why are they not as wild, incoherent, and extravagant as they are? Not to add, that the world has generally acknowledged, and therefore seems to have *experienced* some assistance and directions given to good men by the Deity; that men have been many times infatuated, and lost to themselves, &c. If any one should object, that if men are thus overruled in their actings, then they are deprived of their *liberty*, &c ; the answer is, that though man is a free agent, he may not be free as to *every thing*. His freedom may be restrained, and he only accountable for those acts in respect of which he *is free*.

"5. There *possibly* may be, and most probably are, beings *invisible*, and *superior* in nature to us, who may by *other* means be in many respects *ministers* of God's providence, and authors under Him of many events to particular men, without *altering* the laws of nature. For it implies no *contradiction* or *absurdity* to say there

are such beings: on the contrary, we have the greatest reason to think, what has been intimated already, that such imperfect beings as we are, are far below the *top* of the scale. Though *pictures* of spiritual beings cannot be drawn in our imagination, as of corporeal; yet to the upper and reasoning part of the mind the idea of *spiritual substance* may perhaps be as clear as that of *corporeity*. For what *penetrability* is, must be known just as well as what *impenetrability* is: and so on.

"And since it has been proved that all corporeal motions proceed originally from something *incorporeal*, it must be as certain, that there are incorporeal substances, as that there is motion. Besides, how can we tell but that there may be above us beings of greater powers and more perfect intellects, and capable of mighty things, which yet may have *corporeal* vehicles as we have, but *finer* and *invisible*? Nay, who knows but that there may be, even of these, many *orders*, rising in dignity of nature, and amplitude of power, one above another? It is no way below the *philosophy* of these times, which seems to delight in enlarging the capacities of matter, to assert the *possibility* of this. But, however, my own defects sufficiently convince me, that I have no pretension to be one of the *first* rank, or that which is *next under* the All-perfect.

"Now then, as *we ourselves* by the use of our powers do many times interpose and alter the course of things within our sphere, from what it would be if they were left entirely to the laws of motion and gravitation, without being said to alter those *laws*; so may these *superior* beings likewise, in respect of things within their spheres, much larger be sure, the least of them all, than ours is: only with this difference, that, as their knowledge is more extensive, their intellects purer, their reason better, they may be much *properer* instruments of Divine Providence with respect to *us*, than we can be with respect *one to another*, or to the *animals* below us. I cannot think indeed, that the power of these beings is so large, as to alter or suspend the *general*

laws of the world; or that the world is like a bungling piece of clock-work, which requires to be oft set backward or forward by them: or that they can at pleasure change their condition to ape us, or inferior beings; and consequently am not apt hastily to credit stories of *portents*, &c. such as cannot be true, unless the nature of things and their manner of being be quite reversed: yet (I will repeat it again) as men may be so placed as to become, even by the free exercise of their own powers, *instruments* of God's particular providence to other men (or animals); so may we well suppose, that these *higher* beings may be so *distributed* through the universe, and subject to such an economy (though I pretend not to tell what that is), as may render *them also* instruments of the same providence: and that they may, in proportion to their greater abilities, be capable, *consistently with the laws of nature*, some way or other, though not in *our* way, of influencing human affairs in proper places.

"*Lastly*, what I have ventured to lay before you I would not have to be so understood, as if I peremptorily *asserted* things to be just in this manner, or pretended to *impose* my thoughts upon any body else: my design is only to show, how I *endeavour* to help my own narrow conceptions. There must be *other ways* above my understanding, by which such a Being as God is may take care of *private cases* without interrupting the order of the universe, or putting any of the parts of it out of their channels. We may be sure he regards every thing *as being what it is;* and that therefore his *laws* must be accommodated to the true geniuses and capacities of those things which are affected by them. The *purely material* part of the world is governed by such as are suited to the state of a being, which is *insensible*, *passive only*, and every where and always the *same:* and these seem to be simple and few, and to carry natural agents into one constant road. But *intelligent*, *active*, *free* beings must be under a government of another form. They must, truth

requiring it, be considered *as beings*, who may behave themselves as they ought or not; *as beings* susceptive of pleasure and pain; *as beings* who not only owe to God all that they are to have, but are (or may be) sensible of this, and to whom therefore it must be *natural* upon many occasions to supplicate Him for mercy, defence, direction, assistance; lastly, *as beings*, whose cases admit great variety, and therefore that *influence*, by which he is present to them, must be different from that by which gravitation and common *phenomena* are produced in matter. This seems to be as it were a public influence, the other private, answering private cases and prayers; this to operate directly upon the body, the other more especially upon the mind, and upon the body by it, &c. But I forbear, lest I should go too far out of my depth: only adding in general, that God cannot put things so far out of his own power, that he should not *for ever govern* transactions and events in his own world; nor can *perfect* knowledge and power ever want *proper* means to achieve what is fit to be done. So that, though what I have advanced should stand for nothing, there *may* still be a *particular providence*, notwithstanding the forementioned difficulty. And then, if there *may be* one, it will unavoidably follow, that there *is* one; because in the description of providence nothing is supposed with respect to *particular cases*, but that they should be provided for in such a manner as will at last *agree best with reason;* and to allow that this may be done, and yet say that it is not done, implies a blasphemy that creates horror: it is to charge the *Perfect* Being with one of the greatest *imperfections*, and to make Him not so much as a *reasonable* being.

"I conclude, then, that it is as certain that there is a *particular providence*, as that God is a Being of *perfect reason.* For if men are treated according to reason, they must be treated according to what they are: the virtuous, the just, the compassionate, &c. *as such;* and the vicious, unjust, cruel, &c. according to *what they*

are: and their several cases must be taken and considered as *they are;* which cannot be done without *such* a providence."

I make no apology for the length of this quotation. The subject is so important, and has notwithstanding been so much misunderstood and misrepresented, that every ingenious attempt to illustrate it deserves attention; and the view of it taken by Mr. Wollaston is so clear, philosophical, and satisfactory, that no man who is free from prejudice can read it without benefit, nor, I conceive, without complete conviction.

Before I entirely quit this subject, allow me to remind you, that we have not been contemplating a mere speculation, but have been pursuing a train of reasoning which is practical and highly moral in its tendency. Let the notion once fully occupy the mind of a vicious man, that God is too exalted or too remote from us to watch the progress of individual guilt, to notice and record its propensities, to counteract its designs,—and with what ardour will he run the career of iniquity! While, on the other hand, the conviction that "all things are naked and open" to the piercing eye of God,—that when transgressors say, "surely the darkness shall cover us," behold "even the night shall be light about them," "the darkness and the light being both alike to God[15],"—that no being is too insignificant or too obscure to escape the notice of God,—that none can hide himself in gloom so thick as to be impenetrable to the glance of omniscience,—tends to appal the guilty, and check the luxuriant growth of crimes. And in a world of trial, sin, and difficulty, what can be so consoling to the good as the firm persuasion that God is the God of individuals, and the "*Father* of the faithful," the "refuge and strength" of all who trust in him; that He hears the cry of the suppliant, yes, of *every* sincere suppliant, and, wherever it is needed and duly estimated, "giveth power to the faint;"—that He, who when he promises

[15] Psalm cxxxix. 11, 12.

will perform, has declared that "they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary, shall walk and not faint[16]!"

LETTER XX.

On the Resurrection of the Body.

If a being, which was constituted by the union of two substances essentially different, were appointed to continue, it must continue a *mixed* being, or it would be no longer the *same* being; so that if man is to exist in a future state, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is a necessary consequence of his nature: those

[16] Is. xl. 29, 31. An objecting correspondent has called upon me to reconcile the doctrine of Providence with the existence of moral evil. I entreat his attention to the following often quoted passage from Simplicius, a pagan writer before mentioned in this letter. Simplicius asks, "Whether God may be called the author of sin, because he permits the soul to use her liberty?" and answers the question thus:

"He who says that God should not permit the exercise of its freedom to the soul, must affirm one of these two things: either that the soul, though by nature capable of indifferently choosing good or evil, should yet be constantly prevented from choosing evil; or else that it should have been made of such a nature as to have no power of choosing evil.

"The former assertion (continues he) is irrational and absurd; for what kind of liberty would that be, in which there should be no freedom of choice? and what choice could there be, if the mind were constantly restrained to one side of every alternative? With respect to the second assertion, it is to be observed that no evil is in itself desirable, or can be chosen as evil. But if this power of determining itself either way in any given case must be taken from the soul, it must either be as something not good, or as some great evil. But whoever saith so, does not consider how many things there are which, though accounted good and desirable, are yet never put in competition with this freedom of will: for without it we should be on a level with the brutes; and there is no person who would rather be a brute than a man. If God then shows his goodness in giving to inferior beings such perfections as are far below this, is it incongruous to the Divine nature and goodness to give man a self-determining

who admit the immortality of the soul, and deny the resurrection of the body, therefore, forget the *man*, and, in effect, deprive him of existence beyond the grave. Still, it has been thought, by many persons in all ages, "a thing incredible that God should raise the dead[1];" and the contrary is no where positively asserted, but in the Scriptures received by Christians, or in writings founded upon them. There are many passages in the Old Testament which either obscurely hint at the resurrection, or immediately refer to it[2]: yet they are by no means such as produced a firm belief in the doctrine among the Jews. The *Sadducees*, for example, "say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees allow both[3]." And even among our Lord's disciples, though some of them,

power over his actions, and to permit him the free exercise of that power? Had God, to prevent man's sin, taken away the liberty of his will, he would likewise have destroyed the foundation of all virtue, and the very nature of man; for there could be no virtue were there not a possibility of vice; and man's nature, had it continued rational, would have been Divine, because impeccable. Therefore, though we attribute to God, as its author, this self-determining power, which is so necessary in the order of the universe, we have no reason to attribute to him that evil which comes by the abuse of liberty: for God doth not cause that aversion from good which is in the soul when it sins; he only gave to the soul such a power as might turn itself to evil, out of which he produces much good, which, without such a power, could not have been produced by Omnipotence itself."

Those who wish to go farther into this inquiry than the above observations of Simplicius will lead them, may turn to a very masterly "Essay on the Permission of Evil," in the second volume of the "Works" of Dr. Hamilton, late Bishop of Ossory; or to part the third of Mr. Samuel Drew's valuable "Essay on the Being, Attributes, and Providence of Deity." In the latter of these works most of the objections to what is denominated the doctrine of particular providence, have received a very decisive refutation.

[1] Acts, xxvi. 8.

[2] Such as Job, xix. 23—27. Dan. xii. 2, 3. Is. xxv. 8; xxvi. 19. Hos. vi. 2; xiii. 14. Ezek. xxxvii. 1—14. See also Ps. xlix. 14, 15, and Bootbroyd's note, *in loc*. vol. ii. p. 124 of his Improved Version.

[3] Matt. xxii. 23. Acts, xxiii. 8.

like Lazarus's sister Martha, believed that the dead would "rise again in the resurrection at the last day[4]," others doubted and "wondered what *rising from the dead* could mean[5]." When Paul preached to the philosophers at Athens, and declared to them the resurrection of Jesus, they were astonished at the novelty and singularity of his doctrine, and "said, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them *Jesus* and the *resurrection*[6]:" these *philosophers* were so deplorably ignorant as, when the apostle used the words Ιησους and Αναστασις, to fancy that he was labouring to introduce a new god and goddess amongst them! When he urged the matter still farther, "they scoffed:" and on another occasion, when he was pleading before Agrippa and Festus, the latter interrupted him the moment he adverted to the resurrection of Jesus, exclaiming, "Paul, thou art mad, much learning driveth thee to madness[7]." Conformably with the opinion of most other heathens, Pliny classes it amongst impossible things which God cannot accomplish,—*revocare defunctos*, "to call back the dead to life." And Celsus calls the hope of the resurrection, "the hope of worms, a very filthy and abominable as well as impossible thing: it is that which God neither can nor will do, being base and contrary to nature[8]."

This doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is, however, as I have already intimated, one of the great articles of the Christian faith. We believe that Jesus died, and rose again[9]; we also believe, for so we are taught in the New Testament, that "them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him," that "Christ by his rising became the first-fruits of them that slept," that

[4] John, xi. 24. [5] Mark, ix. 10.
[6] Acts, xvii. 18. [7] Acts, xxvi. 24.
[8] Orig. cont. Cels. lib. v. This, of course, is refuted by Origen; and others of the Ante-nicene fathers, especially Justin Martyr and Tertullian, in their Apologies, most ingeniously defend the doctrine of the church as to this point. See also Clemens Romanus's 1st epistle.
[9] See Letter VIII.

"the dead shall be raised incorruptible," that "the grave and the sea shall give up their dead," that, at this resurrection, "the dead in Christ shall rise first," that the Lord Jesus Christ will change "our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself[10]."

Clearly as this doctrine is revealed, in the above quoted and several other places of Scripture, it is notwithstanding *doubted* by many professing Christians. And it has been usually *denied* by infidels, and selected by them as one of the most vulnerable points in the system of Christianity. Yet, taking Deists upon their own ground, I conceive the reasonableness, if not the necessity, of the resurrection may be established: while, to those who allow the authenticity and correctness of the New Testament history, the matter will be placed beyond the reach of dispute.

In the estimation of Deists, God is a wise and just governor of the world: such a governor must reward the good and punish the wicked: but, in the present state, we often see good men under suffering, bad men following and enjoying pleasure, through the greater part of life: the character of the governor, therefore, requires that there should be a future state in which this great anomaly shall be adjusted; and, of course, a state of existence not for the body alone, nor for the soul alone, but for the *man* in his mixed nature, constituted of soul and body. It is the man, and not a *part* of him merely, which this simple train of reasoning requires us to expect shall be rewarded or punished[11].

[10] 1 Thes. iv. 14, 16. 1 Cor. xv. 20, 52. Rev. xx. 13. Phil. iii. 21.

[11] I am aware it may be said, and indeed it has often been said, that, since consciousness and feeling exist in the soul, the future existence of the *soul* is all that can fairly be inferred from this argument. But we have at least as good reasons for affirming as any can have for denying that in all probability the capacity of the soul for feeling the highest degrees of pleasure or pain depends upon its union with an organized body.

Nor can the conclusion be fairly resisted, unless it can be shown that the resurrection of the body is *impossible*; and that it is *not* impossible may be safely inferred from history, and the analogy of nature, in the following manner.

From history we learn not merely that the body of Lazarus was reanimated after he had been interred four days, and that of Jesus Christ after it had lain in the grave part of three days; but farther, that "*after* His resurrection *many* bodies of the saints which slept arose from their graves," which had been thrown open by the earthquake at his crucifixion, "*and went unto the holy city, and appeared unto many*[12]; thus attesting the truth of his resurrection, and declaring their own rescue from the grave (in which some of them had *long* lain), by virtue of his power over death and corruption. So that to deny the possibility of the resurrection is to deny the truth of several matters of fact, all at least as well attested as any other facts in history; and that in contradiction to some very obvious modes of reasoning, and some striking analogies.

For, in the first place, the restoring to life a body deprived of motion, animation, and sensation, is not beyond the power of God: since the communication of any qualities to an organized body, or body capable of organization, which it had lost, cannot be imagined to require a greater exertion of power than the original creation of such body with certain appropriate attributes. Indeed, cases occur almost daily in which human efforts lead to a change to all appearance (and it should be remembered that we know little of death, except in regard to its mere appearances) as great as the deliverance of a dead man from the silence and inactivity of the grave. I allude to fainting-fits, and instances of suspended animation by drowning. In these the subject is often for a considerable time so completely void of motion, feeling, and, as it would seem, of life, that no one, who had never previously

[12] Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

witnessed or heard of a similar suspension, could avoid concluding that it would be final and eternal. There is, it is true, a difference in the durations of lifelessness in the cases of swooning and apparent drowning, and of real death; but that is more than compensated in the difference of power and skill in the respective agents of restoration.

Nearly allied to these are the examples of peculiar transformations undergone by various insects, and the state of rest and insensibility which precede those transformations: such as the chrysalis or aurelia state of butterflies, moths, and silkworms. The *Myrmeleon formicaleo*, of whose larva and its extraordinary history Reaumur and Roesel have given accurate descriptions, continues in its insensible or chrysalis state about four weeks. The *Libellula* or Dragon-fly continues still longer in its state of inaction. Naturalists tell us that the worm repairs to the margin of a pond in quest of a convenient place of abode during its insensible state. It attaches itself to a plant or a piece of dry wood: and the skin, which gradually becomes parched and brittle, at last splits opposite to the upper part of the thorax. Through this aperture the insect, now become winged, quickly pushes its way, and being thus extricated from confinement begins to expand its wings, to flutter, and finally to launch into the air with the gracefulness and ease peculiar to this majestic tribe. Now who, that saw for the first time the little pendant coffin in which the inanimate insect lay entombed, and was ignorant of the transformations of which we are now speaking, would ever predict that in a few weeks, perhaps a few days or hours, it would become one of the most elegant and active of *winged* insects? And who, that contemplates with the mind of a philosopher this curious transformation, and who knows that two years before the insect mounts into air, even while it is living in water, it has the rudiments of *wings*, can deny that the body of a dead man may at some future period be again invested with vigour and activity, and soar to

regions for which some latent organization may peculiarly fit it?

But I may be reminded, that the analogy, to which I have been calling your attention, is not complete, inasmuch as dead bodies sink from their organized state into corruption, while chrysales are merely inactive, or at most insensible. Let us then advance *this* step, and we shall find a parallel case in the process of vegetation. "That which thou sowest (says the apostle to the Corinthians) is not *quickened* except it die[13]." Seed may be sown, but unless it lose its external configuration, and appear *corrupted*, no future vegetable will spring from it. The little infinitesimal or germen, which is to spring forth into new life, is fed by the death and corruption of the rest: a fact well known not only to scientific botanists, but to almost every gardener and husbandman you can consult. So that those who deny the propriety and correctness of the analogy traced by the apostle, are as little supported by truth and nature as the Corinthian free-thinkers, whose objection he thus philosophically refuted. The apparent corruption which a grain, when deposited in the earth, undergoes, may be considered as the casting of exuviæ, whose removal and decay are necessary to the dawnings of latent life: and thus, in like manner, may the future body be preparing through the mysterious process of dissolution, till the day of the general resurrection, when it shall come forth a glorious body, fitted for new union with the soul from which it had been separated, and so formed as thenceforward to endure for ever. The principal difference in the two cases relates to frequency of occurrence: the process of vegetation from a corrupted grain is observed annually; while the deliverance of a body from corruption in the grave will occur but once. Yet this ought rather to stimulate our hopes than to generate scepticism: the contrast between the sterility and death-like appearance of the vegetable world in winter, and the gladsome

[13] 1 Cor. xv. 37.

verdure, energy, and variety of spring, when God "renews the face of the earth[14]," and enlivens us with balmy air and cheerful skies; is admirably fitted to teach us what the Creator and Governor of the universe *can* effect; to convince us that he can "loosen the bands of death" as easily as he can educe vegetation from corruption; and, in conjunction with the promises of the Gospel, to excite a lively and rapturous anticipation of that delightful period, when "*one unbounded spring*" shall "*encircle all.*"

Objectors, however, have advanced still farther, and urge that after death the body may not merely become insensible, inactive, and undergo corruption; but may experience dispersion of particles, and union with other bodies. Thus the body of a dead man may be burned (as were those of some primitive martyrs by their enemies, in derision of the resurrection), its ashes be scattered in the air, blown about by the wind, or exhaled into the atmosphere: or, after it is resolved into earthy or humid matter, it may be taken up by the vessels which supply plants with nutriment, and at length become constituent parts of the substance of those plants. How can particles thus dispersed half over the earth, or thus intimately combined with other bodies, be recalled from their state of dispersion, or separated from the bodies of which they have subsequently formed constituent parts, and reunited so as to form one body? Here again, we may deprive the objection of all force, by contemplating processes of daily occurrence. Chemists can intermix several liquids, of essentially different kinds, in such manner, that the smallest sensible particle of the resulting liquids shall partake of all the constituent liquids; and then they can by analysis separate this compound substance into all the simple liquids of which it was composed. They can detect, separate, and measure, the several simple substances, of which a certain compound natural mass shall be formed. They can, for example, detect and

[14] Psalm civ. 30.

measure the chromic acid, oxide of iron, alumina, and silica, in a given mass of that natural substance *chromium ferri;* the respective quantities of acidulous water, thick brown oil, thin empyreumatic oil, charcoal, and gases, in any proposed portion of *guaiacum;* or the relative masses and relative weights of the azotic gas, oxygenous gas, aqueous vapour, and carbonic acid gas, in any given volume of *atmospheric air:* and all this, be it recollected, by means within the compass of *human* agents. Does the collecting together of the scattered particles of dead bodies, or the separation of them from other bodies with which they may have become combined, require skill or energy so much greater than the operations of art to which I have just been adverting, that we must pronounce it too difficult for the Creator of the world to perform? Is his knowledge so circumscribed that he cannot tell what becomes of every particle of every body He has created? Or cannot matchless knowledge, and unlimited power, know and accomplish *all* things, required by infinite wisdom or promised by boundless love, as easily and successfully as a chemist can ascertain or separate the various substances in a compound mass?

There still remains one other objection, to which we must reply before we get to "the height of this great argument;" and that may be stated in the following terms: "Of men drowned in the sea, the bodies may be eaten by fishes, and they again by other men; or, among cannibals, men feast upon the flesh of men: in such cases, where one man's body may be converted into part of the substance of another man's body, and so on, how shall each at the resurrection recover his own peculiar body?" To this I beg to quote the answer of Archbishop Tillotson, who first premises these two observations.

"1. That the body of man is not a constant and permanent thing, always continuing in the same state, and consisting of the same matter; but a successive thing which is continually spending, and continually

renewing itself, every day losing something of the matter which it had before, and gaining new, so that most men have new bodies as they have new clothes; only with this difference, that we change our clothes commonly at once, but our bodies by degrees.

"And this is undeniably certain from experience. For so much as our bodies grow, so much new matter is added to them, over and besides the repairing of what is continually spent; and after a man be come to his full growth, so much of his food as every day turns into nourishment, so much of his yesterday's body is usually wasted, and carried off by insensible perspiration, that is, breathed out of the pores of his body, which, according to the static experiment of *Sanctorius*, a learned physician, who, for several years together, weighed himself exactly every day, is (as I remember) according to the proportion of five to eight[15] of all that a man eats and drinks. Now, according to this proportion, a man must change his body several times in a year.

"It is true, indeed, the more solid parts of the body, as the bones, do not change so often as the fluid and fleshy; but that they also do change is certain, because they *grow;* and whatever grows is nourished and spends, because otherwise it would not need to be repaired.

"2. The body which a man hath at any time of his life is as much his own body, as that which he hath at his death; so that if the very matter of his body, which a man had at any time of his life, be raised, it is as much his own and the same body, as that which he had at his death, and commonly much more perfect; because they who die of lingering sickness, or old age,

[15] Later physiologists have shown that Sanctorius ascribed to the excretory function of the skin somewhat too great an influence. In temperate climates, however, the weight of matter taken daily from a human body by insensible perspiration is usually between two and four pounds, instead of five, as Sanctorius supposed; so that a man will change his body several times in the course of his life, though not several times in a year, as the archbishop, assuming the accuracy of Sanctorius's observations, inferred.

are usually mere skeletons when they die; so that there is no reason to suppose (or, at least, not to insist) that the very matter of which our bodies consist at the time of our death, shall be that which shall be raised, that being commonly the worst and most imperfect body of all the rest.

"These two things being premised, the answer to this objection cannot be difficult. For as to the more solid and firm parts of the body, as the skull and bones, it is not, I think, pretended that the cannibals eat them; and if they did, so much of the matter, even of these solid parts, wastes away in a few years, as, being collected together, would supply them many times over. And as for the fleshy and fluid parts, these are so very often changed and renewed, that we can allow the cannibals to eat them all up, and to turn them all into nourishment; and yet no man need contend for want of a body of his own at the resurrection, viz. any of those bodies which he had ten or twenty years before, which are every whit as good, and as much his own, as that which was eaten[16]."

Thus far have I been led by a desire to convince you that the resurrection of the body is not impossible, and therefore that it ought not to be ridiculed or denied, even though the belief of it had not been authoritatively proposed to us in Scripture. You will expect me to offer you a few thoughts relative to the kind of body that will be raised; but on this topic I shall be brief, as I have no wish to carry you far into the regions of conjecture.

We are assured, by the great Head of the church, that "the hour is coming in which all that are in their

[16] Tillotson's 194th Sermon. The Archbishop is here of an opinion diametrically opposite to that of Bishop Stillingfleet, as to the resurrection of *every* particle of the body buried. He has Mr. Locke, however, on his side. For a summary view of the controversy between Stillingfleet and Locke, and an attempt at compromising their dispute, you may consult the eighth of Dr. Watts's Philosophical Essays.

See also Dr. Clarke's remarks on this interesting inquiry, as quoted in Bishop Watson's Theological Tracts, vol. iv. p. 235—237.

graves shall hear his voice and come forth; *they that have done good unto the resurrection of life,* and *they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.*" At that great and solemn event, when we shall "all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," "the dead shall be raised *incorruptible:*" and it is probable that the bodies of the righteous and the wicked, though each shall in some respects *be the same* as before, will each be in some respects *not the same,* each undergoing some change conformable to the character of the individual, and suited to his future state of existence; but both, as the passage just quoted clearly teaches, are then rendered *indestructible.* Respecting the *good,* it is said, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory," we shall be *like him,* "our body shall be fashioned like his glorious body[17];" yet, notwithstanding this, "it doth not yet fully appear what we shall be;" and that for a very obvious reason. Our present manner of knowing depends upon our present constitution, and we know not the exact relation which subsists between this constitution and the manner of being in a future world; we derive our ideas through the medium of the senses; the senses are necessarily conversant with terrestrial objects only: our language is suited to the communication of present ideas; and thus it follows that the objects of the future world may in *some* respects (whether few or many we cannot say) differ so extremely from terrestrial objects, that language cannot communicate to us any such ideas as would render those matters comprehensible. But language may suggest striking and pleasing analogies; and with such we are presented by the philosophic apostle. "All flesh (says he) is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, another of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds;" and yet all these are fashioned out of the same kind of substance, mere inert matter, till God gives it life and activity. "There are also celestial bodies, and

[17] Col. iv. 4. 1 John, iii. 2. Phil. iii. 21.

bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and that of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in *corruption,* it is raised in *incorruption:* it is sown in *dishonour,* it is raised in *glory:* it is sown in *weakness,* it is raised in *power:* it is sown an *animal* body (σομα ψυχικον), it is raised a *spiritual* body [18]."—It is sown an *animal* body; a body which previously existed with all the organs, faculties, and propensities, requisite to procure, receive, and appropriate nutriment, as well as to perpetuate the species: but it shall be raised a spiritual body, refined from the *dregs* of matter, utterly impermeable by every thing which communicates "pain [19]," freed from the organs and senses required only in its former state, and probably possessing the remaining senses in greater perfection, together with new and more exquisite faculties, fitted for the exalted state of existence and enjoyment to which it is now rising. In the present state the organs and senses appointed to transmit the impressions of objects to the mind have a manifest relation to the respective objects; the eye and seeing, for example, to light; the ear and hearing, to sound. In the refined and glorious state of existence to which good men are tending, where the objects which solicit attention will be infinitely more numerous, interesting, and delightful, may not the new organs, faculties, and senses, be proportionably refined, acute, susceptible, or penetrating? Human industry and invention have placed us, in a manner, in new worlds; what, then, may not a spiritual body, with sharpened faculties, and the grandest possible objects of contemplation, effect in the celestial regions to which Christians are invited? What

[18] 1 Cor. xv. 39—44.

[19] "Neither shall there be any more *pain.*" Rev. xxi. 4. The Greek word, πονος, here translated pain, comprehends toil, fatigue, and excessive labour of body, as well as vexation and anguish of spirit.

delight would Archimedes have experienced, could he by the aid of a microscope have seen the fluids moving through the vessels of some of our minutest insects;—or viewed with a telescope the belts of Jupiter, or the ring of Saturn? And how would these sink into insipidity when compared with the rapture with which a being, possessing a spiritual body, having its former senses perfected, and new ones communicated, shall explore all the glories and wonders which will be exhibited to it when it shall be admitted into heaven, and *enabled* to see God?

Here, clogged with animal bodies, and borne down to the earth by *gravity* as well as our propensities, we are soon tired of bodily exertion, our mental attention flags, and our affections, "cleaving to the dust," may impede the operation of both body and mind: but there,—where the body will be liberated from the influence of gravitation (the causes of gravity being removed), motion may be free and without fatigue, the body may obey with astonishing facility the volitions of the soul, and transmit itself from place to place with the utmost celerity,—there the senses will no longer degrade the affections, the imagination no longer corrupt the heart,—the magnificent scenery thrown open to view will animate the attention, give a glow and vigour to the sentiments; that roused attention will never tire, those glowing sentiments will never cloy: but the man now constituted of an indestructible body as well as of an immortal soul, may visit in eternal succession "the streets of the celestial city," may "drink of the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb;" and dwell for ever in those abodes of harmony and peace, which, though "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the imagination of man to conceive," we are assured "*God hath prepared for them that love Him*[20]!"

But I leave you to pursue and improve this train of delectable reflection; and am Truly yours.

[20] 1 Cor. ii. 9.

LETTER XXI.

On Eternal Existence after Death.

It is one of the grand peculiarities, and (as I doubt not you will find it, on consideration) one of the great excellences of the New Testament, that it exhibits both promises and threatenings of *eternal* existence after natural death. These are presented to the contemplation of mankind under the character of *reward* and *punishment*, which are correlatives: the existence of one implies the existence of the other: the belief of the latter is as necessary as the belief of the former: for, without it, the belief of a future state will have little if any influence on the bulk of mankind.

This is not a narrow notion confined to the minds of theologians of a rigid stamp: it is the sentiment of several acute philosophers, and wise politicians; of some indeed who have neither been condemned nor contemned for an undue attachment to what are fashionably termed religious *dogmas*. *Montesquieu*, for instance, affirms, "that the idea of a place of future rewards necessarily imports that of a place or state of future punishments; and that when the people hope for the one without fearing the other, civil laws have no force[1]." Lord *Bolingbroke* also observes, that "the doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state has so great a tendency to enforce the civil laws, and to restrain the vices of men, that reason, which (as he pretends) cannot decide for it on principles of natural theology, will not decide *against* it on principles of good policy[2]." And even Mr. *Hume*, when speaking of the notion that "the Deity will inflict punishments on vice, and confer infinite rewards on virtue," says, "those who attempt to disabuse persons of such prejudices, may, for aught he knows, be good reasoners; but that he *cannot* allow them to be *good citizens and*

[1] Spirit of Laws, vol. ii. book xxiv. ch. 14.

[2] Bolingbroke's Works, 4to edit. vol. v. p. 322.

politicians, since they free men from one restraint upon their passions, and make the infringement of the laws of equity and society, in one respect, more easy and secure[3]."

The ancient philosophers had some feeble glimmerings of a future state; but, as you have long ago learned[4], they were sadly clouded by error and absurdity; and the awful idea of accountability was in great measure, if not entirely, excluded. This is not to be wondered at, considering how defective and erroneous their notions of the Supreme Being were. The belief of a God, and that of a future state, are indissoluble: no consistent Theist *can* believe that human existence ceases at death; nor, on the other hand, can any one who believes in a future world be an Atheist. Our ideas on these subjects, however, must have been very vague independent of revelation: but "God hath brought life and immortality *to light*, through the *Gospel*." Christians are taught that man has two states of existence, the one temporal, the other eternal: ineffable, interminable bliss, is promised to those who are "faithful unto death;" while "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," are represented as the eternal doom of "every soul of man that doeth evil," and repenteth not. The Scriptures also suggest to us a remarkable and essential distinction, not only in regard to the duration, but to the nature, of the states before and after death. Here the capacity of enjoyment and that of suffering appear to have nearly an invariable ratio: those who have the richest sources of delight seem to have most avenues of pain; every new road to knowledge gives them a fresh insight into their ignorance; and every refinement upon pleasure renders them more alive to distress: while those who are blunted against the finer feelings seem in an equal degree hardened against the pressure of evil; so that though they may enjoy less, they likewise suffer less: and the happiness of this life is, probably, much more

Hume's Philosophical Essays, 1st ed. p. 231. [4] Letter iii.

uniformly diffused (the stings of conscience not considered) than cursory observers might suppose. But this balancing of bliss and woe will not be found beyond the grave. In the future world the capability of enjoyment will, to the blessed, be perpetually expanding, while that of suffering will be entirely destroyed: and, on the other hand, with those who are consigned to endless punishment, the capacity of suffering will, there is reason to fear, continually increase, while that of enjoyment will be blunted and annihilated;—for "the wrath of God *abideth* on them." They are considerations like these, that give such unbounded importance to the concerns of the soul, and make us exclaim to those who regard them with supineness,—

"O! be wise!
Nor make a curse of *immortality*.
Know'st thou the importance of a soul immortal?
Behold this midnight glory; worlds on worlds!
Amazing pomp! redouble this amaze;
Ten thousand add; add twice ten thousand more;
Then weigh the whole, ONE *soul* outweighs them all;
And calls the' astonishing magnificence
Of *unintelligent* creation poor." YOUNG.

Allow me to place before you a few of the passages of Scripture, in which the nature and duration of the future state of existence are expressly declared. And first I shall quote part of the language of our Lord in his awful description of the solemnities of the judgment day. "Then the King will say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "And *these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal*[5]." In one of his prayers to his heavenly Father, the Messiah prayed, "Father, I desire that those whom thou hast given me may be

[5] Matt. xxv. 34, 41, 46.

with me where I am, to behold my glory[6]." In his celebrated Sermon on the Mount, among the introductory beatitudes is this:—"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God[7]." And in the Revelation we have the promise, "To him that overcometh I will grant to sit upon my throne, even as I also overcame, and sit with my Father on his throne[8]." Hence, in other parts of the same inspired book, it is said, "They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne will dwell among them. They will hunger no more, nor will they thirst any more; nor will the sun strike on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne will feed them, and will lead them to living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor lamentation, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away[9]." Well may language labour to describe felicity such as this: even hyperbole upon hyperbole would here be defective, as is indicated by the Apostle Paul when he calls it "*an exceedingly exceeding and eternal weight of glory*[10]."

Let us now contemplate the other side of the picture. "If thine hand cause thee to offend, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter maimed into life, than, having two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire; *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* And if thy foot cause thee to offend, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life lame, than, having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the unquenchable fire; *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* And if thine eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast

[6] John, xvii. 24.
[7] Matt. v. 8.
[8] Rev. iii. 21.
[9] Rev. vii. 15—17; xxi. 4.
[10] 2 Cor. iv. 17, where the *καθ' υπερβολην εις υπερβολην* is infinitely emphatical, as Blackwall justly remarks.

into hell fire; *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* For *every one shall be* SALTED WITH FIRE[11]." "Between us and you (who are in hell torment) there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither *can they pass to us that would come from thence*[12]." "The Lord Jesus shall be manifested from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: and these shall suffer punishment, even everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power[13]." To these is reserved "*the blackness of darkness for ever*[14]." "The smoke of their torment ascendeth *for ever and ever*; and they have *no rest* day nor night[15]." "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night *for ever and ever*[16]."

Such, on the one hand, are the delightful, and, on the other, the tremendous declarations of Scripture. They are so plain and forcible, that it is scarcely credible that any other sentiments than those they inculcate should be cherished by persons who profess to be believers in Christianity. Yet there are some who contend that the soul *sleeps*, utterly void of sense, consciousness, and activity, from the time of death till the day of judgment; the admission into any degree of happiness being suspended till that event: and others, who dream of *temporal* punishments after the time of life is past, who fancy that there is a state of preparation and improvement beyond the term of life, through which bad men will pass, and come out fitted for "the beatific vision of God." Both these appear to me to be very great mistakes; though the latter is inconceivably the most dreadful. I shall, therefore, devote

[11] Mark, ix. 43—49. [12] Luke, xvi. 26.
[13] 2 Thes. i. 7—9. [14] Jude, 13.
[15] Rev. xiv. 11. [16] Rev. xx. 10.

a few pages to each of them; beginning with that of *the sleep of the soul.*

Thought is as essential to mind, as figure is to matter. So that, unless we can suppose matter to exist without figure, we cannot suppose mind to exist without thought. "A real suspension of thought, then, is the destruction of the mind; and what might be termed a restoration of thought, would, in fact, be the formation of a new mind. If, therefore, at death, the thinking principle should rest, should cease to act, it would at the same instant cease to be. Its very existence and character depend on its action. And if, at the resurrection, the inspiration of the Almighty should again make man a living soul, capable of thought, such an act of omnipotence, with respect to mind, would be a new creation. The mind, formed for inhabiting the glorified body, would thus be another mind than that which formerly possessed the body when in a state of mortality; the identity of the soul would be destroyed; a reward and punishment would be useless; and a day of retribution unavailing." For why should you and I be any way concerned for the happiness or misery of the men who should ages hence be raised from our ashes, when the future beings could be in no respect the same in reference to us than as they were arbitrarily to be denominated the same, because their bodies were to be constituted of the same matter which now constitutes ours? Why should we regard any promised rewards or threatened punishments in another life, when they can only be enjoyments and sufferings of a new race of beings made out of the old materials which we dropped at our dissolution?

The notion, then, of *soul-sleeping* is not without danger, since it deprives religion of its most cogent motives, or at least weakens them excessively. How, you may ask, do any persons contrive to deduce it from Scripture? Entirely, I believe, from the circumstance that death is frequently in Scripture depicted under the image of sleep. Dead persons are there often said

to be "fallen asleep:" and in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, we are told that "they which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." But in such passages the word *sleep* is used in reference to the body; and I know not one in which the same metaphor is employed in allusion to the *soul*. In Daniel, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake[17]," applies manifestly to the body. More expressly still we learn in Matthew, "that the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which *slept*, arose[18]." And again, "David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, *fell asleep*, and was gathered to his fathers, and *saw corruption*: but he whom God raised again saw no corruption[19]." Here that which is described as falling asleep is evidently the body, that which undergoes corruption. Many other passages might be adduced to the same purpose.

It is also easy to quote or refer to various portions of the word of God which run directly counter to this opinion of the sleep of the soul. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, for example, we have a description of the state in which good and bad men are placed *immediately after death*, in which there is no allusion to a suspension of happiness or misery; but, on the contrary, it appears that directly after the termination of mortal existence, the poor man was *comforted*, the rich *tormented*. Whether the delight and the anguish are equal to what they will be after the day of judgment, when the soul and body will be inseparably united, or whether they are principally the pleasurable and the dreadful anticipation of future bliss and woe, we are not there taught: those points are, however, amply decided from other passages of Scripture; and we, at least, learn from this that the soul does not, at death, pass into a state where it is unconscious of pleasure or pain. So again, when our Lord promised the penitent malefactor, on the cross, that he should "*that* day be with him in Paradise," he could not

[17] Dan. xii. 2. [18] Matt. xxvii. 52. [19] Acts, xiii. 36, 37.

mean that he should be conveyed thither to *sleep*. Nor can we imagine that he meant to say, as has been sometimes asserted, "verily I say unto you *this day*, thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Either of these would be sadly trifling with the trembling penitent's feelings; and would be, besides, perfectly incompatible both with the character of the Saviour, and with the solemn and important purposes for which he was then suffering. Once more, the doctrine of the sleep of the soul is irreconcilable with the language of the apostle Paul: "I am in a strait between two, having a desire *to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better:* nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you[20]." If, after death, the soul *sleep* till the day of judgment, and that be all that is meant by *being with Christ*, not only is the phraseology very strange, but the apostle fancies himself in a difficult dilemma, when a sensible man would decide without hesitation. On the one hand, he might be useful to the Church, and might invite many more to "the Shepherd and Bishop of souls;" on the other, though he would die earlier, he would not earlier enter into glory, but would be rendered perfectly useless to those whom he loved as himself, and deemed "his joy, and crown of rejoicing." Lastly, in another letter of the apostle Paul, he says, "Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that while we sojourn in the body, we are absent from the Lord; we are confident, I say, and *willing* rather to be absent from the body, and *present with the Lord*[21]."

[20] Phil. i. 23, 24. Be it remarked, more for a practical purpose than to strengthen the argument above, that the apostle's "strait" was not whether it was good to live, or good to depart, because both were good; but he doubted which of the two was more desirable; that is, to do the work and promote the interests of Christ's kingdom, or to die and serve his own interest by passing immediately to his reward. And hence, with regard to private Christians, although heaven must have our highest esteem, and be the object of our habitual best desire; yet earth must have its share, its *appropriate* share, of our daily thoughts, otherwise present duty will be neglected.

[21] 2 Cor. v. 6, 8.

Here the expression, "present with the Lord," as a necessary consequence of the reasoning, implies happiness immediately subsequent to death; whereas sleep is not happiness, but insensibility. These passages, which have been quoted again and again to refute the doctrine of soul-sleeping, will, I doubt not, fully suffice to convince you that that doctrine is directly contradictory to many of the most stimulating and cheering promises in the New Testament.

I must now guard you against the adoption of the still more dangerous error, respecting the duration of future punishment; and I shall call your attention the more seriously and earnestly to this subject, because it is far from being a matter merely speculative, but is one of the highest moment with regard to its practical tendency. The notion of punishment for a limited period has been espoused by many, in the earlier as well as the present times; but it was strongly opposed by the primitive Christians: "*We* say (observed Justin Martyr) that the souls of the wicked being reunited to the same bodies shall be consigned over to *eternal* torments; and *not*, as Plato will have it, to the period of *a thousand years only*: but if you will affirm this to be incredible or impossible, there is no help but you must fall from error to error till the day of judgment convinces you we are in the right[22]." They who oppose the doctrine of the eternal suffering of bad men after

[22] Just. Mart. Apol. ii. § 8. The same sentiment is reiterated, and its tendency to stimulate to holy conduct most forcibly exhibited, in various parts of this admirable Apology. The contrary opinions, says the Apologist, are due to the suggestions of "evil spirits, who do all they can to *smother* the notion of hell-fire." "But since all departed souls *continue in sensation*, and *everlasting fire* is treasured up for the unrighteous, let me exhort you to lay these things seriously to heart." Yet Dr. *Estlin*, p. 18 of his "Discourses on Universal Restitution," adduces Justin Martyr as an evidence in favour of his opinions! I request the serious attention of this gentleman, and of those who have repeated his erroneous assertion, to the following observations of Dr. Waterland:—"It should be considered that the moral obliquity and turpitude of misquoting or misrepresenting authors, consists in this: that it is a means to *deceive the simple, to surprise the unwary and unlearned* (who must or will receive things

death, have recourse to a variety of arguments; but they may be reduced to three, which I shall here consider.

I. It is said that, "since God is a Being whose goodness and mercy are indisputably infinite, he may naturally be expected to overlook inconsiderable errors; and even when he does punish, to observe a proportion between offences and punishments, and not punish temporary sins by inflicting eternal suffering, because that is unjust: he is bound by his nature and attributes to be merciful as well as just; and therefore not to make the greater portion of his intelligent creatures for ever unhappy."

This argument, though specious, is by no means irrefutable; as I trust the following observations will show.

First. To argue from the Divine perfections by mere inference is a very convenient, but not very complete, way of disproving any assertion we please. In such case the arguer and his opponent have only each to take it for granted that he has an adequate idea of the Divine attributes, and the business is settled. But if this *cannot* be taken for granted, the *major* proposition of the syllogism is unfounded, and the whole necessarily falls. Now, this exactly occurs in the instance before us: on the one hand, it is affirmed that God is bound to be merciful, and, on the other hand, it is admitted, that he *will* be merciful to a certain extent, limited by his other attributes: but we have no measure of that extent (for "who hath known the mind of the Lord?") except so far as he has furnished us with it in the Scriptures; and there we are sufficiently cautioned against relying upon mere mercy, "uncovenanted mercy," by being assured that "the *wrath* of God *abideth* on" unbelievers, and that "he shall have judgment *without mercy*, that hath showed no mercy[23]."

upon trust): it is taking advantage of the blind side of human nature, *laying a snare* for such readers (perhaps ninety-nine in a hundred) as read not with due care and thought. I do not see but this very method of the Doctor is big with all this mischief."

[23] John, iii. 36. James, ii. 13.

2dly. If God is bound by his own nature to be merciful to his frail creatures, and to restore them to his favour after they have expiated their sins by intense suffering of limited duration, the work of redemption by Jesus Christ must be unnecessary. So that this argument operates unfavourably two ways at least: it nearly destroys all obligation to Jesus Christ for dying to expiate human guilt; since the criminal would, according to this hypothesis, have suffered the full demerit of his own sins in a limited time: and it imputes to a being of unbounded wisdom, justice, and love, the injustice of "bruising" his dearly beloved Son, of "putting him to grief" and shame, and leading him to an ignominious death, to cancel the sins of mankind, which he was bound to forgive without any such sacrifice.

3dly. As, in human courts of judicature, criminals are naturally inclined to estimate too lightly their own turpitude, and to think the punishment inflicted upon them much too heavy; so, in like manner, may it be with regard to transgressions against God. None of us estimates duly the "exceeding sinfulness of sin:" for we have all been guilty of it, and are, therefore, all inclined to palliate it: and if to palliate it, then to lessen the punishment which we think it justly deserves: so that, on this account, as well as because of our ignorance of the attributes of Deity, we are totally unqualified to determine (and much more in opposition to positive declarations) the adequate duration or magnitude of future punishment.

4thly. We know not to what extent future misery may result from the nature and duration of the soul, independently of punishment absolutely inflicted. The loss of the chief good, and exclusion from heaven, are the necessary consequences of transgression: and a consciousness of this loss, as well as remorse and self-condemnation on account of it, flow naturally from the existence of the soul: these *may* constitute the venom of "the worm that never dies," and the fierceness of "the fire that is not quenched;" and it is easy to see that it may be perfectly equitable in the Divine

Being to suffer these to continue. If the greater part of the punishment be *conscious guilt*, that does not seem very likely to produce purity, holiness, and love to God, and thus ultimately to issue, as the Universalists imagine, in restoration to the Divine favour.

5thly. It by no means follows that, because impenitent sinners will be eternally punished, God "makes the *greater portion* of his intelligent creatures for ever unhappy." Yet this, in the estimation of Dr. Hartley (one of the most able and excellent men that ever defended the system of the Universalists), is the grand argument. "To suppose (says he) future punishments to be absolutely eternal, is to suppose that the Christian dispensation condemns *far the greater part of mankind to infinite misery* upon the balance, whilst yet it is every where declared to be a dispensation of mercy, to be *glory to God* and *good will to men*: which is a great apparent inconsistency[24]." To remove this apparent inconsistency, then, let it be recollected, that at least *half* the children which are born, die before they are seven years old, and are doubtless happy in a future world, their faculties being expanded at death so as to prepare them for the full enjoyment of heaven[25];—that such of the heathen as "do by nature the things contained in the law," and whose consciences "excuse" or acquit them, conformably to the true meaning of the apostle[26], will be admitted into bliss for the Redeemer's sake: that though, for ages, true Christians may have been the minority, yet a time *will* come, and that not of short duration, but probably continuing for many centuries, when "the *earth shall be* FULL *of the know-*

[24] Hartley on Man, vol. ii. ch. 5, prop. 95.

[25] "Of *such* is the kingdom of God." Matt. xix. 14.

[26] Rom. ii. 14, 15. See also Baxter's End of Doctrinal Controversies, chap. xii. § 3; ch. xiii. and xvi. I might likewise refer to Dr. Macknight *in loc.* and in various parts of his Commentary and Notes; but though I appreciate his learning highly, and think that in many parts of his valuable work on the Epistles he diffuses considerable light over the sacred text, I still apprehend that he often carries his speculations much farther than a sound theologian can accompany him.

ledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea[27]:" let these, I say, be recollected, and duly considered, and there will not remain the shadow of a suspicion that the *greater* part of mankind will be eternally miserable[28].

6*thly.* Waving all these considerations, it may be remarked that the measure of penalty will be regulated

[27] Is. xi. 9.

[28] *Richard Baxter*, when resolving this, among "the Intrinsical Difficulties in the Christian Faith," has some observations, which, considering that they were published thirty years before Huyghens's "Conjectures concerning the Planetary Worlds," are as calculated to interest the man of science as the man of piety.

"I confess (says he) it greatly quieteth *my mind* against this great objection of the numbers that are damned and cast off for ever, to consider how small a part this earth is of God's creation, as well as how sinful and impenitent. Ask any astronomer, that hath considered the innumerable number of the fixed stars and planets, with their distances, and magnitude, and glory, and the uncertainty that we have whether there be not as many more, or a hundred or thousand times as many, unseen to man, as all those which we see (considering the defectiveness of man's sight, and the planets about *Jupiter*, with the innumerable stars in the Milky Way, which the tube hath lately discovered, which man's eyes without it could not see),—I say, ask any man who knoweth these things, whether all this earth be any more in comparison of the whole creation, than one prison is to a kingdom or empire, or than the paring of one nail, or a little mole or wart, or a hair, in comparison of the whole body. And if God should cast off *all this earth*, and use *all the sinners* in it as they deserve, it is no more sign of a want of benignity or mercy in him, than it is for a king to cast one subject of a million into a jail, and to hang him for his murder, or treason, or rebellion." "I know it is a thing uncertain and unrevealed to us, whether all these globes be inhabited or not: but he that considereth that there is scarce any uninhabitable place on earth, or in the water or air, but men, or beasts, or birds, or fishes, or flies, or worms and moles, do take up almost all, will think it a probability so near a certainty, as not to be much doubted of, that the vaster and more glorious parts of the creation are not uninhabited: but that they have inhabitants answerable to their magnitude and glory (as palaces have other inhabitants than cottages): and that there is a connaturality and agreeableness, there as well as here, between the region or globe and the inhabitants. Whether they are all to be called Angels or Spirits, or by what other name, is unrevealed to us; but, whatever they are called, I make no question but our number to theirs is not one to a million." Reasons of the Christian Religion, p. 389: published in 1667.

by the just ends of government, and not necessarily by either the quality of the offence, or the time of its performance. If the suffering were proportionate to the *time* of commission, then it would follow that some of the greatest crimes, such as murder or suicide, which may be committed in a much shorter time than many other less heinous sins, would for that reason be more slightly punished; which is repugnant to all correct ideas of justice. So that the objection of temporary crimes being punished by indefinitely long sufferings is, plainly, of no force. And as to the *ad valorem* punishment, if that alone were threatened, the consequences would obviously be, that petty sins would abound, that the heart and conscience would become cauterized by an indulgence in them, and thence proceed without a pang to the commission of greater crimes. The grand design of government is to prevent all crime; and if the apportioning of penalties to transgressions be not so properly a consideration of justice, as a matter of prudence and wisdom in the lawgiver, then *justice* cannot well be said to be concerned in any imagined disproportion between sins and sufferings. But justice *is* concerned in this, that the righteous and the wicked should not be treated alike, as well as that greater sins should have a heavier punishment; all which may evidently be adjusted in the degree and intenseness of suffering, without there being any difference in its duration.

7thly. However, it must be observed, "that the primary end of all threatenings is not punishment, but the *prevention* of it. For God does not threaten that men may sin, and be punished; but that they may *not sin*, and so escape the punishment threatened. And therefore the higher the threatening runs, so much the more mercy and goodness there is in it, because it is so much the more likely to hinder men from incurring the penalty that is threatened[29].

[29] Tillotson's 35th Sermon.

II. Those who reject the doctrine of eternal punishment contend that the word which we translate *to punish* is often used in a mitigated sense; and they farther bring forward many passages to show either that after a certain portion of suffering the criminal will be restored to favour, or that "eternal death" means annihilation.

Thus, in their note on Matt. xxv. 46, the recent Socinian translators (so frequently quoted in these letters) say, "the word here rendered *punishment* properly signifies correction inflicted for the *benefit* of the offender." To this it may be replied, that the true signification of κολασις (the word adverted to) is punishment in general: my authorities are, first, *Hesychius*, who explains it by τιμορια: and, secondly, *Scapula*, who translates it *punitio, item castigatio*. But farther, in 1 John, iv. 18, we find the same word translated by *torment* even in the Socinian version; and it is not easy to trace there any reference to a torment for the benefit of the person tormented. So again, in Acts, iv. 21, where the word is κολασωνται, we cannot perceive how the *punishment*, with which the apostles Peter and John were threatened, was calculated for their benefit. And once more, in 2 Peter, ii. 9, where we are told that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver those that are godly out of trial, and to reserve those that are unrighteous to the day of judgment *to be punished* (κολαζομενους);" the phrase surely cannot imply punishment for the *benefit* of the offender; because, if so, the *worst* offenders are singled out to experience that benefit; for, according to those very translators, they are "*chiefly* those who walk after the flesh with *polluted desires*, and *despise dominion:* who are *presumptuous, self-willed*, and *not afraid to blaspheme* dignities," &c. that are selected to undergo this *beneficial* process.

As to the passages usually adduced to prove that the punishment in a future world will be annihilation, it may be remarked, first, that a state of misery, which is as bad or worse than *death*, may without impropriety be called by that name, as indeed it often is by the

best ancient Roman and Greek authors; and thus, "the *lake of fire*," into which the wicked shall be cast, to be there tormented, is expressly called "*the second death*[30]." And secondly, if "eternal death" mean eternal annihilation, then all positive punishment and torment is excluded, contrary to the language of our Lord, who says "there shall be *weeping*, and *wailing*, and *gnashing of teeth*;" besides which, upon this hypothesis, the punishment of all sinners must be equal, because annihilation is *not-being*, in which there can be no degrees: but this is contrary to all ideas of justice.

The notion of *annihilation* after a temporary punishment, held by some, has not the least foundation in Scripture, and is in itself too absurd to demand any specific reply: and, with regard to all these speculations respecting mitigated suffering, it may be remarked, once for all, that if it be true, that not merely a single criminal act, but a single impure or even thoughtless expression, may transfer evil indefinitely to the end of time, by communication from a second to a third, from a third to a fourth, from an older to a younger, from him to one still younger, and so on in all varieties of direction; and if, moreover, the Divine Being intended his threatenings should have their full effect in deterring from crime, whether diffused deliberately or thoughtlessly, it cannot be conceived that in the same Revelation he should have given any intimations of his intention to mitigate their severity, or not to execute them at all. If it be wise to excite the strongest dread of future punishment, any other declarations, intended to weaken that impression, would be *unwise*.

III. But the grand current of the arguments against the eternal duration of future punishment flows from the affirmed limited meaning of the words *αιων, αιωνιον*, &c. which it, therefore, becomes necessary to examine rather particularly.

"The word translated *everlasting*," say the late Socinian translators[31],) "is often used to express a long

[30] Rev. xx. 14. [31] Note on Matt. xxv. 46, p. 62.

but indefinite duration: Rom. xvi. 25; 2 Tim. i. 9; Philemon, ver. 15. This text, *therefore*, so far from giving countenance to the harsh doctrine of eternal misery, is rather *favourable* to the more pleasing and more probable hypothesis, of the ultimate restitution of the wicked to *virtue* and to *happiness*."

I certainly can trace no allusion to either ultimate virtue or happiness in the express declaration, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal:" or, at least, I must be permitted to think that if the wicked may extract a grain of hope from so strong a passage, the righteous have at least equal reason to dread, that, after a similar duration, they may lapse from virtue and happiness into wickedness and misery; and thus the good and the bad may change places at the termination of that *æonian* period, which is here alike placed before each class of persons. It can never, I conceive, be consistent with sound criticism, to interpret the same word used twice in the same sentence and connexion, and in both directly applicable to the *soul*, which is naturally immortal, so as to indicate eternity in the one instance, and terminable duration in the other.

But the word *αιωνιος*, we are told, is *sometimes* employed to express a limited but very long duration, and is three or four times (perhaps) so used in Scripture: being indeed derived from *αιων*, which denotes duration or continuance of time, but with great variety: and "*therefore*" it can never mean eternity. I will not here argue from the probable derivation, *αει ων*, *always being*[32]; but consider what is thus advanced in

[32] That *continued existence* is the essential idea comprehended in the word, we know upon the authority of Aristotle. Speaking of the celestial intelligences, he says, they are "without change or infirmity, and, possessing a most excellent and satisfactory life, they continue through all eternity" (*διατελεῖ τὸν ἀπαντα* ΑΙΩ͂ΝΑ). Then follows this remarkable passage:—"For this word has been divinely spoken by the ancients: for the consummation containing the time of every life not supernatural is called *its age* (its period of duration). For the same reason, the consummation of the whole heaven, and the

opposition to the more received opinions, as emanating from an established canon of criticism, to which all subordinate considerations must bend. This canon may, I suppose, be fairly enunciated thus: "When words have by frequent use deviated from their primitive meaning, we must, in all our researches into the real meanings of authors, especially in disputed matters, endeavour to ascertain the original sense of such words, and thereby abide." Unless this be a legitimate canon of criticism, the "*therefore*" of the critics just quoted stands for nothing: let us then apply it to a few examples.

1. To *discourse* means primarily to *run up and down:* "therefore" when a person delivers a moral or religious discourse he runs up and down.

2. *Sarah* signifies originally *a lady or a princess:* "therefore" every one named Sarah is a lady or a princess.

3. *Φιλαργυρια,* according to its primary acceptation, signifies the love of *silver:* "therefore" it can never denote avarice, or the love of money generally; and consequently 1 Tim. vi. 10, is erroneously translated in every version extant.

4. Αγγελος originally denotes a mere messenger: "therefore" it never means any thing else;—therefore Acts, xii. 16, should be rendered "It is his *messenger*[33];"—and Matt. xiii. 39, should be, "the harvest is the end of the *age,* and the reapers are the *messengers;*" and we have thence an irresistible exhortation to hospitality in Heb. xiii. 3, for by this "some have unknowingly entertained *messengers!*"

5. Διαβολος means primarily an accuser, informer, or slanderer: "therefore" it cannot properly denote any thing else;—therefore John, viii. 44, should be rendered "Ye are of your father the *slanderer;*"—Acts,

consummation containing the unlimited duration, and the immensity of all things, is *eternity,* deriving its name from *always being*—immortal and divine." Lib. i. Cœl. c. 10.

[33] Socinian Version, p. 298.

x. 38, should be "Jesus went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the *slanderer;*"—Matt. xiii. 39, should be "the enemy that sowed them is the *informer;*"—and 1 Pet. v. 8, might be translated very consistently with these notions, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the *informer* walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

6. Αιδιος in its primary use denotes eternal in a restrained sense, and is, in fact, employed in Jude, ver. 6, to signify without *end* only, and not without beginning also: "therefore" it can never properly indicate *absolute* eternity, and consequently Rom. i. 20, contains no full and positive declaration of God's eternal power and Divinity.

7. Πνευμα primarily denotes breath or wind; "therefore" Rom. viii. 26, should commence with "The *wind* helpeth our infirmities;"—and James, ii. 26, should be translated, "The body without the *wind* is dead." Hence also the propriety of the exhortation in Gal. v. 16,—"Walk in the *wind;*"—and hence again the axiomatic evidence of the proposition in Gal. vi. 8,—"He that soweth to the wind shall of the *wind* reap *age-lasting* life;"—as well as of that in John, iv. 24,—"God is a *wind.*"

8. Θεος, from θεω, to place, is a name borrowed from the heathen, being that by which they denoted an imaginary god, or an idol made with hands: in this sense it is sometimes used in the New Testament, as at Acts, xiv. 11; xxviii. 6. 1 Cor. viii. 5: "therefore" we must not be confident that the word can ever designate any other than false gods.

All these "therefores," strange and ridiculous as they may appear to you, are just as "pleasing and probable," so far as the genuine meaning of the respective words and passages is determinable by means of this much admired rule of interpretation, as the inference that κολασιν αιωνιον denotes *limited* suffering for the *good* of offenders, to terminate in their eternal holiness and happiness.

Indeed, this curious mode of enucleating difficulties, and rendering Scripture plain and simple, furnishes us with many "pleasing" deductions: and among others it has the happy effect of rendering the "glorious Gospel of the blessed God" nearly, if not entirely, nugatory. Thus, as we have seen, it would leave us in doubt as to the existence of any beings invisible to us; for "messengers" and "accusers" may be very different beings from angels and devils: and farther, instead of having "life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel[34]," the Gospel would be stripped of almost every direct declaration relative to immortality (as *αφθαρσια may* mean incorruptibility only, and *αιωνιος* terminable existence), and we should have to gather this cheering and consoling truth from remote and circuitous inference.

Some patronisers of the hypothesis I am now opposing appear to think this no great objection to their system: but are prepared to expel from the New Testament the forcible English words and phrases, *eternal, everlasting, for ever, world without end*, &c. and to substitute in their place words from a dead language which themselves acknowledge they do not well comprehend, and which to a plain unlettered Christian can convey no definite idea whatever. Hence, as has been remarked by an ingenious anonymous author on this subject, when men look "into this sacred volume for the important information promised, they there read of an *æonian* God, who regards his people with an *æonian* love, has made with them in Christ an *æonian* covenant, provided for them an *æonian* salvation, together with an *æonian* righteousness, through which they shall now experience *æonian* consolation, and finally possess *æonian* life in an *æonian* kingdom; but that if they reject and despise all this, they will be compelled to suffer *æonian* punishment. In this case how great their disappointment and mortification[35]!"

[34] 2 Tim. i. 10.

[35] Free Strictures on "An Address to Candid and Serious Men."

After these observations it can scarcely be necessary for me to *affirm* that the Greek word so frequently used in Scripture with regard to a future world, expresses correctly a proper eternity; or to support that affirmation by examples. I shall, however, refer you to two portions of Scripture which have been often and properly quoted as decisive, namely, Rev. xx. 10, and 2 Cor. iv. 18. In the first mentioned of these, the phrase εις τους αιωνας των αιωνων is so energetic, that if it do not fully signify eternity to come, I know nothing in the Greek language which does. And in the latter specified passage the things which are seen, all things visible or material, the world and every thing in it, are put in complete opposition to the unseen future state; the things which are seen being said to be for a short time (or temporary) while the things which are not seen are *everlasting*.

To bring these arguments to a conclusion, let me remark that the awful picture of the duration and terrible nature of future punishment exhibited in the passage from the 9th chapter of Mark's Gospel, introduced in an early part of this letter, is calculated to produce the deepest conviction in the minds of all who receive the Scriptures as the word of God. The expression, "*where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,*" is reiterated with solemn and dreadful energy: and the declaration, "*every one shall be salted with fire,*" implies, I conceive, that as salt preserves from putrefaction flesh to which it is applied, so those unhappy victims of Divine justice shall be salted with fire, and, instead of being consumed by it, shall, in the wretched abodes to which they are consigned, continue immortal in the midst of their flames! This sentiment was decidedly avowed by Tertullian, who, in his Apologetic (cap. 48), says, "the profane and the hypocrite shall be doomed to a lake of ever flowing fire, and *fueled with incorruptibility* from the Divine indefectible nature of the flame which torments them! The mountains burn with perpetual fire, and are mountains still: why,

then, may not the wicked and the enemies of God burn like these?"

How far the misery of the eternal state will be corporeal, and how far mental, I pretend not to decide: but I will extract for your perusal a sentence or two from Dr. Hartley, who, you will recollect, was a *Universalist,* though much too sincere a lover of truth to run the length in support of the "restoration" hypothesis which some later writers have gone. "With respect to the punishments of the wicked in a future state (says he) we may observe, that these may be corporeal, though the happiness of the blessed should not be so. For sensuality is one great part of vice, and a principal source of it. It may be necessary, therefore, that actual fire should feed upon the elementary body, and whatever else is added to it after the resurrection, in order to burn out the stains of sin. The elementary body may also, perhaps, bear the action of fire for ages, without being destroyed. Like the *caput mortuum,* or *terra damnata* of the chemists. For this *terra damnata* remains after the calcination of vegetable and animal substances by intense and long continued fires. The destruction of the world by fire, spoken of both in the Scriptures and in many profane writings, the phenomena of comets, and of the sun and fixed stars, those vast bodies of fire which burn for ages, the great quantity of sulphureous matter contained in the bowels of the earth, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone, alluded to in the New Testament, the representation of future punishment under the emblem of the fire of Gehenna, and, above all, the express passages of Scripture, in which it is declared that the wicked shall be punished by fire, *even everlasting fire,* confirm this position concerning the corporeal nature of future punishment, as well as give light to one another.

"But if the punishments of another world should be corporeal in some measure, there is still the greatest reason to believe, that they will be spiritual also; and

that by selfishness, ambition, malevolence, envy, revenge, cruelty, profaneness, murmuring against God, infidelity, and blasphemy, men will become tormentors to themselves, and to each other; deceive and be deceived; infatuate and be infatuated; so as not to be able to repent and turn to God, till the appointed time comes, *if that should* EVER *be.*

"But we are not to suppose that the degree, probably not the duration, of future punishment, corporeal or mental, will be the same to all. It may also *perhaps* be, that there may be some alleviating circumstances, or even some admixture of happiness. *Only the Scriptures do* NOT *authorize any such conjectures; and therefore we ought to proceed with the utmost caution, lest we lead ourselves or others into a fatal mistake.* And, indeed, if the happiness of the blessed be pure and unmixed, as the Scriptures seem to declare, and give reason to hope, then may the misery of the wicked be *unmixed* also[36]."

Such is the language of Dr. Hartley; from which you will perceive that *his* expectations of future punishment being any thing short of everlasting unmitigated anguish and despair, were very faint indeed. Happy would it be for the interests of religion and the extermination of vice, if all subsequent defenders of similar opinions had proceeded with equal diffidence and candour. I regret that the length to which it has been necessary to carry my reasonings, and the number of texts I have been obliged to select in order to show the fallacy and danger of the theory of the Universalists, prevent my expatiating, as I intended, upon the indefinite and perpetual extension of the intellectual and moral faculties, which will be experienced by the "spirits of the just made perfect" in the heavenly world; where, although the happiness of each will be so entirely *replete* that he will have no conception of any felicity greater than his own; yet the understanding will be eternally occupied with such an infinity of

36 Hartley on Man, vol. ii. prop. 89.

truth as it may be exploring, and contemplating, and delighting in for ever,—while the affections will be eternally charmed with such an infinity of *goodness* and *love*, as will excite an everlasting reciprocation of love to Him "who first loved us." That you may not lose any thing, however, but gain considerably by this omission, permit me to close the present letter by referring you to the second of Dr. Watts's discourses in his work on "Death and Heaven:" a discourse which contains one of the most fascinating and inspiring descriptions of the employments, the holiness, and the happiness of glorified saints I have ever perused; and which no one, I conceive, who has any pretensions to taste and sensibility, to say nothing of piety, can read without surprise and delight.

I remain, &c.

LETTER XXII.

On Christian Duties.

LACTANTIUS, an ancient father of the church, in one of his appeals to the adversaries of true religion, drew a bold, but not unfaithful, picture of the genuine effects of the Gospel upon the heart and conduct of sincere Christians:—"Give me (says he) a man who is choleric, abusive in his language, headstrong, and unruly; and with a very few words (the words of God) he shall be rendered gentle as a lamb.—Give me a greedy, avaricious, closefisted man, and I will presently return him to you a generous creature, freely bestowing his money by handsful.—Give me a cruel, blood-thirsty wretch, instantly his ferocity shall be transformed into a truly mild and merciful disposition.—Give me an unjust man, a foolish man, a sinful man; and on a sudden he shall become honest, wise, and virtuous. In one laver (the laver of regeneration), all his wickedness shall be washed away. So great is the efficacy of the *Divine Wisdom*, that when once admitted into the

human heart, it expels folly, the parent of all vice; and in accomplishing this great end, there is no occasion for any expense, no absolute need of books, or deep and long study or meditation. The benefit is conferred gratuitously, easily, expeditiously; provided the ears and the heart *thirst after wisdom.* Did any, or *could* any of the heathen philosophers accomplish such important purposes as this[1]?"

This language of the *Christian Cicero* (as he was usually denominated) conveys no vain and empty boast; nor does it, under pretence of exalting Religion, insult and trample upon reason and philosophy. The effects here ascribed to religion have been frequently produced by it, and will always be produced when it is allowed its genuine and complete operation. And with respect to the supposed insult offered to reason, there can be no such thing, unless that be an insult to reason, which renders its real nature palpable, and guards against the abuse of it while it teaches its proper use. Reason has been termed, and not improperly, "*the* EYE *of the soul*:" for as the eye cannot see without light, so neither can reason know without instruction. The progress of mankind in learning and science has been made, strictly speaking, by *groping*, by feeling out one truth after another, and adding it to the general stock; except, indeed, when some grand discoveries have been struck out once in a century, or perhaps less, by the force of genius; but even these, whatever benefits may have resulted from them, have not been discoveries of such truths or propositions, as are developed in Revealed Religion. Reason can no more instruct itself, because it knows by instruction, than the eye can give light to itself, because it sees by the light. This observation applies peculiarly to religious matters; and you may safely infer from it, that "a man may as well take a view of things upon earth in a dark night, by the light of his own eye, as pretend to

[1] Lactan. lib. iii. de fals. sapient. c. 26, p. 328, ed. 1660.

discover the things of heaven, in the night of nature, by the light of his own reason[2]." Upon these points, says a very powerful reasoner, Bishop Horsley, "the evidence of Holy Scripture is, indeed, the only thing that amounts to proof. The utmost that reasoning *can* do is to lead to the discovery, and, by God's grace, to the humble acknowledgment of the weakness and insufficiency of reason; to resist her encroachments upon the province of faith; to silence her objections, and cast down imaginations, and prevent the innovations and refinements of philosophy and vain deceit."

The grand attributes of reason are, its capability of receiving, and, when properly disciplined, of retaining, whatever is communicated to it, and its power of discriminating, when it has suitable data, between truth and falsehood, or between fitness and want of fitness to accomplish certain purposes. And these attributes are possessed in the highest perfection, when, as Paul expresses it, "the eyes of our understanding (της διανοιας, the faculty of separation or discernment) being enlightened, we may know what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of the glory of our inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe[3]." Now, if these faculties of the soul be duly exercised, it will be seen that the religion of Jesus Christ is all it professes to be, and is capable of effecting all that its advocates ascribe to it; that it is conformable to the highest reason, and is, therefore, deserving of the warmest admiration and of the most cordial reception. The religion we are taught in the Gospel leads inevitably to the exaltation and perfection of our noblest faculties: it requires us to use the things of this life as in reason they ought to be used, to cherish such tempers and dispositions as are the glory of intelligent creatures, to avoid such conduct as would degrade and debase our nature, to walk in such wisdom as exalts our character, to practise such piety as will raise us above the world and elevate us to God.

[2] Bishop Horne. [3] Eph. i. 18, 19.

**" His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl."—YOUNG.**

If these be the genuine productions of religion, it is plain that they can never be too universally known and felt. Hence results the duty of promulgating religious knowledge to the widest extent; as well as that of bringing every action of life under the influence of religious principles: for if it be advantageous for *one* person to be wise, it is more so for *all* to be wise; and if it be productive of profit and delight to an individual to be once wise, it is infinitely more so for him to be wise always. If it be commendable to avoid sin and folly to-day, it will be equally commendable to avoid them to-morrow, and to the end of life: if God ought to be worshiped and loved " with all the heart. and mind, and soul, and strength" now, he ought to be so worshiped and loved for ever: if the faithful discharge of every personal and relative duty be required of us now, it is equally required of us always: if being pure and holy, and free from guile, if exercising ourselves to promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures and the glory of God, if aspiring after communion with the Deity, be productive of " joy and peace" to-day, they will have a like tendency through life, and will assuredly issue in indescribable, unending felicity. So that, as he knows not truly what reason is, who does not always wish to live conformably to it; neither does he know the true use or nature of religion, who wishes to confine it to times or seasons, or persons, or places. " He who thinks it grievous to live always in the spirit of religion, to have every part of his life full of it, would think it much more grievous to be as the angels of God in heaven."

There is a unity of design in the gift of the Christian Religion, and there must, in like manner, be unity of design in the profession of it. Its immediate tendency is at once to promote the glory of God and the happiness of man; and its various doctrines, precepts, and promises, all converge to that grand point. Selfishness

is, therefore, excluded; while happiness, individual as well as general, is necessarily predicated and ensured in the Christian system. Its promises allure the soul to heaven, while they prompt the believer to benevolent and upright conduct: its doctrines expand and delight the intellectual faculties, while they furnish at once the purest and the strongest possible motives to virtue and holiness[4]. Thus it happens that the Scriptures, as I have before observed, furnish a consistent and harmonious, though not a connected scheme of morality; for the scheme is harmonious, in so far as the same great purposes are always kept in view, and as it includes no contradictory or impossible injunctions; though its various precepts are scattered about, and not strictly connected, because one and another were delivered at distinct times to different persons, according to their respective circumstances and necessities.

Faith and practice constitute the whole of our religion; and none of the sacred writers is ever, as I recollect, so exclusively occupied with one of these as to forget or neglect the other. Hence, Christians are not merely exhorted to believe such and such propositions, but they are reminded that such belief, to be beneficial, must be influential; and they are exhorted to "let their conversation or conduct be as becometh the Gospel," that they "may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," among whom they are to "shine as lights in the world[5]."

Christianity, then, is decidedly moral in its tendencies: and, therefore, since I have explained to you what is proposed for your *belief*, it is natural that you should expect me, before I close our correspondence, to devote a few pages to the enumeration of the chief *practical* duties which are binding upon Christians.

[4] "Chose admirable! La Religion Chrétienne, qui ne semble avoir d'objet que la félicité de l'autre vie, fait encore notre bonheur dans celle-ci."—MONTESQUIEU.

[5] Phil. i. 27; ii. 15.

This I shall now attempt with all possible regard to brevity, wishing you to consider it as a bare enumeration, and earnestly referring you to the Bible itself, as to the richest storehouse of moral precepts. In this enumeration, I shall adopt the order of several moral philosophers, and consider, 1st, the duties a man owes to himself; 2dly, those which he owes to society; 3dly, those which are due to God.

I. PERSONAL DUTIES. These will manifestly be such as tend to preserve our health, and to secure our happiness; for "Godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come:" they will, therefore, include the government of our affections, appetites, and passions, the regulation and improvement of our temper, the purification of the heart, and an increase of useful knowledge. Thus we are earnestly exhorted to humility, meekness, temperance, chastity, and modesty, diligence, contentment, cheerfulness, self-denial, and mortification, and to edification in general; all the contrary vices being forbidden in the most forcible terms. To prove this I need quote but a very few precepts and aphorisms; for the sake of some order, taking the words as I have already placed them before you.

Humility. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low." "I charge every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." "Mind not high things; but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Humble yourselves therefore in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." "In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself[6]."

Meekness. Meekness is a "fruit of the Spirit." "The meek will God guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way." "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: he that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him." "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools." Let your moderation be known unto all men." "Be angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil[7]"

Temperance. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." "When thou sittest to eat, consider diligently what is before thee; and put a knife to thy throat if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of dainties, for they are deceitful meat. Be not among wine-bibbers, nor amongst riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." "They that are drunken are drunken in the night; but let us who are of the day be sober." "Let us walk honestly as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness." For "drunkenness, revellings, and such like, are works of the flesh;" and "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God:" but "temperance is a fruit of the Spirit." "They that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast, shall receive the reward of unrighteousness[8]."

Chastity and Modesty. "This is the will of God,

[6] Matt. v. 3; xviii. 4. James, i. 9. Rom. xii. 3, 16. 1 Cor. v. 7. James, iv. 6, 7, 10. Phil. ii. 3.

[7] Gal. v. 23. Ps. xxv. 9. Prov. xiv. 17, 29; xxix. 20. Eccles. vii. 9. Phil. iv. 5. Eph. iv. 26, 27.

[8] Luke, xxi. 34. Prov. xxiii. 1, 2, 3, 20, 21. 1 Thes. v. 7, 8. Rom. xiii. 13. Gal. v. 19, 21, 22, 23. 2 Pet. ii. 13.

even our sanctification; that we should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lusts of concupiscence, as the Gentiles which know not God." "God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness." "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." "Walk not as other Gentiles walk; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness greedily." "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." "Put all filthy communication out of your mouth; indulge neither filthiness nor foolish talking." "Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall enter into the kingdom of God." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God; and that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which temple are ye." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Let women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array: but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." "Abstain from all *appearance* of evil[9]."

Diligence. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that; or whether they both shall be alike good." "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; which, having no guide, overseer, nor ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." "Be not slothful." Let every man "labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." "There are

[9] 1 Thes. iv. 3, 4, 5, 7. 1 Pet. ii. 11. Eph. iv. 17, 19. Matt. ix. 28. Col. iii. 8. Eph. v. 4. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 19; iii. 16. 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. 1 Thes. v. 22.

some which walk disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies: now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread. If any man will not work, neither should he eat." "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men." "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord[10]."

Contentment. "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith." "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased: for though while he lived he blessed his soul, yet when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him." "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." "I know both how to be abased and how to abound. I have learnt in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called, being a servant (a *slave*, δουλος)? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." "I would have you without anxiety; that they which weep may be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it. For the fashion of this world passeth away." "Godliness with contentment is great gain." "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish

[10] Eccles. xi. 6. Prov. vi. 7, 8. Heb. vi. 12. Eph. iv. 28. 2 Thes. iii. 10—12. Prov. xxii. 29. Rom. xii. 11.

and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For avarice is the root of all evils, which, some grasping at, have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves all around with many sorrows." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee[11]."

Religious Joy and Cheerfulness. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright." "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." "Rejoice in hope of the glory of God." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." Believing in Jesus Christ, "ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low." "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you." "Be always cheerful." (Παντοτε χαιρετε. Semper gaudete.) "And the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer[12]."

Self-Denial, &c. "If any man (saith Jesus Christ) will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." "Put off the old man

[11] Prov. xxx. 8, 9. Ps. xxxvii. 16. Prov. xv. 16; xxviii. 20. Ps. xlix. 16—18. Jer. xlv. 5. Phil. iv. 11, 12. 1 Cor. vii. 21, 30—32. 1 Tim. vi. 6, 8—10. Matt. vi. 19—21. Heb. xiii. 5. It will be perceived, that I have taken the liberty of translating 1 Tim. vi. 10, so as to preserve the metaphor, which has always appeared to me to be very beautiful and striking.

[12] Ps. xxxiii. 1; xcvii. 11. Rom. v. 2. Phil. iv. 4. 1 Pet. i. 8. James, i. 9, 10. 1 Thes. v. 16, 18. Is. xxxv. 10. John, xvi. 33.

with his deeds; knowing this that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: keep under your bodies, and bring them into subjection. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind[13]."

Edification. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared with it." "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul; but he is in the way of life that keepeth instruction." "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." "Build up yourselves in your most holy faith." "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." "Take heed *what* ye hear." "Believe not every spirit: but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them; meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear

[13] Luke, ix. 23. Eph. iv. 22. Col. iii. 9. Rom. vi. 5; viii. 13. Gal. v. 24. Col. iii. 5. 1 Cor. ix. 27. 2 Cor. x. 3. Rom. xii. 2.

unto all." "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil[14]."

RELATIVE OR SOCIAL DUTIES. The duties a man owes to society are all comprised under the general terms "doing justly" and "loving mercy," and all emanate from that most comprehensive and admirable precept given by our Lord,—"Do ye unto others, as ye would they should do unto you." Thus it is that we are enjoined to abstain from offering the least wrong or injury to others, in their person, their property, or their reputation: we are exhorted to "render to all their due," to be sincere and upright in all our words and actions, to speak truth invariably, to abide by our promise though it be to our hurt, to "provide things honest in the sight of all men." All fraud and falsehood in our professions and dealings, all injustice and violence, all malignity and envy, are expressly and repeatedly forbidden. We are cautioned against being angry at others without cause; we are commanded most forcibly to abstain from slander: being exhorted "to speak evil of no man," and neither to raise evil reports ourselves against our neighbours, nor to promulgate them when they have been raised by others. Not only are we forbidden to injure others in any respect whatever; but we are taught that it is our bounden duty "to do good to all men" as far as we have ability and opportunity, having however a still more forcible command with respect "to them who are of the household of faith." We are required to assist others in their necessities and distresses, to sympathize with them in their afflictions, to rejoice in their prosperity; when it is necessary, to distribute to them of our worldly substance for the supply of their wants; to aim at converting such of them as are unbelievers, either in theory or practice, from "the error of their

[14] Prov. iii. 13; viii. 11; x. 17; xv. 32. Ps. cxi. 2. Jude, 20. 1 Pet. ii. 2. 1 Tim. iv. 13. Mark, iv. 23, 24. 1 John, iv. 1. 1 Thes. v. 21. Heb. xiii. 9. 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. Eph. v. 15, 16.

way;" to reprove them, when it is requisite, in the spirit of meekness, and use every effort, consistent with other duties, to promote their welfare, temporal and spiritual. With regard to enemies, we are commanded to "*love*" them. Not only is the "rendering evil for evil" forbidden, but we are commanded to return good for evil: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head[15];" that is, as Parnell correctly explains the metaphor, in his "Hermit,"—

"Thus artists melt the sullen ore of lead,
With heaping coals of fire upon its head;
In the kind warmth the metal learns to glow,
And loose from dross the silver runs below."

Intercession in worship is also an essential, though much neglected branch of our duty to others. The mutual love of the first Christians seems to have been principally kept alive by prayers for each other: and in all times this duty of intercession, properly exercised, raises Christian brotherhood as much above the common class of human friendships, as heaven is above earth. "I thank my God (said the Apostle Paul to his friend Timothy), that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." And thus did all the primitive Christians; drawing down mercies from heaven through the appointed medium, and causing a confluence of spiritual blessings to flow upon each, in answer to the united supplications of all. Christians are, in like manner, exhorted to "pray for kings, and all that are in authority;" and indeed, by fair inference, if not by express command, every individual in each class of society, is required to pray for the welfare and happiness of all other persons. And this duty is not only binding, but manifestly *beneficial*: for sincere and fervent intercession would evidently be

[15] Prov. xxv. 21, 22. Rom. xii. 20.

one of the best arbitrators of differences, the best cure and preservative against unkind tempers, angry and malignant passions, the best promoter of true friendships; as well as an unfailing test of the state of our own hearts with regard to ourselves and others. All these, and numerous other duties which I cannot here specify, have their foundation laid in the noblest sentiment, love; whence it follows that Christianity is a Religion of benevolence. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*." "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, *love his brother also*[16]."

Besides the general precepts to which I have thus adverted in a very cursory manner, prescribing the duties of justice and benevolence towards all mankind, there are also particular injunctions in regard to the duties incumbent upon us in the several stations and relations we occupy in civil and social life; all of which are of great importance to the welfare of families and nations, as well as of individuals. Of these I here present a selection.

Husbands and Wives. "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." "Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself: so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." "Ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto

[16] Matt. v. 44. Rom. xii. 20. 2 Tim. i. 3. Matt. xxii. 39. John, xiii. 34. 1 John, iv. 10, 11, 21. James, ii. 8. Luke, x. 33—35, &c.

the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life." "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord: for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." "Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear[17]." "The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping." "A prudent wife is from the Lord. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her; she will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her[18]."

Parents and Children. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; having them in subjection with all gravity." "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." "Chasten thy son betimes, while there is hope; and let not thy soul spare for his crying. For foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child: but the rod and reproof give wisdom: withhold not correction, and thou shalt deliver his soul from hell." "The children ought not to lay up for the parents; but the parents for the children." "If any provide not for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." "Children, obey your pa-

[17] Proh quales feminas habent Christiani! said Labanius:—O! what excellent wives the *Christians* have!

[18] Col. iii. 19. Eph. v. 25—30, 31. 1 Pet. iii. 7. Eph. v. 33, 22, 23, 24. 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. Prov. xix. 13, 14; xxxi. 11, 12, 26, 27, 28.

rents in the Lord; for this is right. Obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." "Honour thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth." "The eye which mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it[19]."

Masters and Servants. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, forbearing threatening; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." "Despise not the cause of thy man-servant, or of thy maid-servant, when they contend with thee. Did not he that made thee in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us all in the womb?" "Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour, but shalt fear thy God." "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God." "Servants, obey your masters in all things, and please them well; not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity." "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward: for this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience-sake towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." "Be content with your wages[20]."

Magistrates and Subjects. "The judges and officers that shall be rulers over you shall be able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness. They shall judge the people at all seasons, and hear the causes between their brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger

[19] Eph. vi. 4. 1 Tim. iii. 4. Prov. xxii. 6; xix. 18; xiii. 24; xxii. 15; xxiii. 13, 14; xxix. 15. 2 Cor. xii. 14. 1 Tim. v. 8. Eph. vi. 1, 2, 3. Col. iii. 20. Prov. xxx. 17.

[20] Col. iv. 1. Eph. vi. 9. Job, xxxi. 13, 15. Lev. xxv. 43. Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7, 8. Col. iii. 22. Tit. ii. 9, 10. 1 Pet. ii. 18, 19. Luke, iii. 14.

that is with him." "They shall not wrest judgment; they shall not respect persons in judgment: but they shall hear the small as well as the great. They shall not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; neither take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. They shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's." "It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness; for the throne is established by righteousness." "The prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession." "Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy." "Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness." "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation: for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou not then be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience-sake. For this cause pay you tribute also; for they are God's messengers." "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well [21].

[21] Deut. xvi. 18, 19; i. 13, 16, 17. Exod. xviii. 21, 22. Lev. xix. 15. Prov. xvi. 12. Ezek. xlvi. 18. Prov. xx. 28; xxv. 5. Rom. xiii. 1. 2—6. 1 Pet. ii. 13—16.

You can scarcely fail to remark, that the exhortations to these and other relative duties are independent of *character*. We are commanded to be dutiful to parents, affectionate to children, kind to servants, just to subjects, obedient to magistrates and monarchs, *absolutely;* and not merely dutiful to *tender* parents, affectionate and communicative of instruction to *dutiful* children, diligent under the employment of *kind* masters, obedient to *wise* governors, and so on; which appears to me a mark of great wisdom in the deliverance of such injunctions. For we thence learn, that though the *extent* of obligation to several duties may perhaps vary in some slight degree with the conduct of the individuals towards whom the respective sorts of behaviour are due, yet that the obligation itself results from the mutual relation subsisting between the persons, so that each particular duty *must* be performed, or we are criminal: whereas, if the relative duties were made to depend upon character, they would depend upon *interpretation* of character, which may often be erroneous; and a man's mind, nay, his *fancy*, would, in reference to his duties to others, become his law, his tribunal, and his judge.

There is an important class of reciprocal duties arising from the connexion subsisting between pastors or ministers of churches, and their flocks; but these diverge into too many separate branches to be adequately treated in small compass. I therefore proceed to notice, though with infinitely more brevity than is commensurate with their vast moment,

III. DUTIES TO GOD. In the Gospel we have imparted to us the noblest and most exalted conceptions of the Supreme Being; and the various relations in which he has been pleased to manifest himself as sustaining, in respect of his creatures and of his people, are amply revealed; while the corresponding duties are urged upon us, and the most palpable and obvious directions given with regard to their extent and obli-

gation. Thus we are commanded to "love the Lord our God, with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength:" which is represented by our Saviour as "the first and greatest commandment[22];" from which all other duties emanate. We are told that we must be animated with a pure and ardent zeal for his glory, and must consider the pleasing and honouring him, as infinitely preferable to the indulgence of any sensual inclinations. We are farther taught, that our *love* to God, if genuine, will be accompanied with a solemn and holy *fear* of his Divine majesty; indeed the terms are described as in a measure coexistent, neither operating to any great extent without the other. The fear, therefore, enjoined upon believers, is not of a discouraging or desponding nature; but a cautious, watchful fear, of offending and grieving our heavenly Father. It is farther required of us to exercise trust in God; implying faith, confidence in his wisdom and mercy, unreserved submission to his will, and resignation to all his dispensations; and we are exhorted to live under a practical and habitual conviction of his essential presence with all, and of his spiritual presence with truly devout persons. A strict obedience to his righteous commands is most energetically enforced; and this, besides honour and worship in general, includes the diligent and faithful discharge of every personal and social duty. We are also urged to aspire after a conformity to God in all his imitable or communicable attributes; to be "holy as he is holy, pure as he is pure, perfect as he is perfect," &c. (the likeness, however, being obviously one of quality, not of equality), and to this end we have set before us the spotless example of "the Captain of our salvation;" being assured that we most resemble God, when the greatest portion of "the same mind" is in us, "which was also in Christ Jesus." We are required to worship "God,

[22] Matt. xxii. 37, 38.

who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth:" deadness, dulness, and formality, both in prayer and praise, are hence excluded; and a remarkable simplicity and purity of worship is represented in the New Testament as that which God will most approve. The rites therein prescribed are few in number, and highly excellent and instructive in their nature and signification. The only sacraments enjoined upon us are "*Baptism*" and "*the Supper of the Lord;*" both of which, being positive institutions, should doubtless be observed with all possible regard to the circumstances exhibited in their primitive establishment. Great care seems taken, however, to guard us against mistaking "the form" for "the power of godliness;" since we are taught that rites and ceremonies are as nothing, unless the heart be purified and the conduct become holy and upright. Private meditation, secret, domestic, social, and public worship, are each most powerfully recommended, nay, commanded: the benefits resulting from the "communion of saints" in worship, and the evils flowing from "forgetting to assemble ourselves together," are strikingly depicted. We are also shown the advantage as well as the duty of "confessing our sins to God;" and of throwing ourselves entirely upon his covenanted mercy for pardon, acceptance, and gracious assistance. Much of this, I am well aware, is extremely repugnant to the notions which too much prevail; but it is consistent with Scripture; and you will scarcely be able to turn to a page in the New Testament (where the subject is not purely historical), in which you will not find exhortations to one or other of the duties I have here attempted to sketch.

It farther appears, being indeed a necessary consequence of the Christian system, that we are required, in order to worship God acceptably, to approach him through the appointed Mediator, by reason of whose intercession the prayers and praises of his sincere disciples are approved. Hence results another class of

duties relating to "the Lord Jesus Christ," whom we are required to "receive by faith;" and whom we are taught to regard continually and habitually as our instructor, atonement, intercessor, guardian, example, &c. We are also exhorted to pray for the influences of God's Holy Spirit, and at all times so to conduct ourselves, as not to grieve or offend that Spirit, but rather to draw down a more copious communication of its influences. These latter duties, however, are not considered by all as such, but are regarded as of minor importance. I shall, therefore, throw together for your perusal a few passages from which you may learn that the sacred writers did not place those duties in a subordinate rank.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, he will give it you." "Whatever ye do in word or deed, *do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." "My sheep hear my voice, and I hear them, and *they follow me*." "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit and *rejoice* in Jesus Christ." "I am crucified with Christ: yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me:* and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by *the faith* of the Son of God, who loved me and *gave himself* for me." "Whom, having not seen, *ye love*; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet *believing ye rejoice* with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith." "If any man *love* not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maran-atha." "Grace be with all them that *love our Lord Jesus in sincerity*." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his *Holy Spirit* to them that ask him?" "Quench not the Spirit." "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." "Be not drunk with wine, wherein

is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit[23]."

From this view of Christian duties, slight and imperfect as I am conscious it is, I trust you will perceive that the New Dispensation, considered as a source of morality, is infinitely superior to any scheme that was ever devised by the wisest and greatest of men, who were not favoured by a revelation from God. Such is the simplicity of the Gospel precepts that the plainest and most uncultivated understanding may comprehend them; and such, at the same time, their beauty and excellency, their fitness to expand the intellect, to enrich the soul, to improve the character of individuals, as well as to illuminate the whole world and to fill it with harmony and love, that they furnish scope for the noblest contemplations of the philanthropist and the philosopher. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether[24]."

But rules of moral duty, however complete, precepts, however excellent, will be of comparatively little avail, unless they be enforced by suitable motives obvious to the understanding, and energetic in their operation. And here again the superiority of the Religion of Christ is equally evident. Good men are supported in the path of duty, and consoled under affliction, by the enchanting prospect of "an *eternal* weight of glory:" bad men

[23] John, xvi. 23. Col. iii. 17. Eph. ii. 18. John, x. 27. Phil. iii. 3. Gal. ii. 20. 1 Pet. i. 8. Heb. xii. 1, 2. 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Eph. vi. 24. Luke, xi. 13. 1 Thess. v. 19. Eph. iv. 30; v. 18. Gal. v. 25. For many more texts thrown into an order well calculated to enforce the several Christian duties, the reader may consult Gastrell's Institutes of the Christian Religion, Warden's System of Revealed Religion, or Talbot's Analysis of the Holy Bible.

[24] Ps. xix. 7, 8, 9.

are persuaded to turn from their evil courses by having exhibited to them "the terrors of the Lord;"—the delights of heaven, the unending anguish of hell; the blessed "society of the just made perfect," and that of devils and "damned spirits;" are the awful alternatives placed before them. The example of him "who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor," and tabernacled amongst men, as well to show them the way to glory, as to secure glory for them, stimulates powerfully to action: while the privileges of the Gospel and the truly extraordinary means employed to entitle believers to those privileges, furnish in their turn admirable incentives to virtuous conduct. Let me entreat you to peruse attentively the few portions of Scripture referred to at the foot of this page[25]; and then to consider whether any thing less than the irresistible power which "out of stones could raise up children to Abraham," can touch the soul which is insensible to the impressions they are calculated to make. Lastly, for our great encouragement, Divine assistances are promised, to strengthen and preserve in the path of duty all who are duly aware of their own insufficiency, and humbly seek for guidance and protection where alone they are to be obtained.

I have now, my dear friend, executed the task I undertook at your entreaty: happy shall I esteem myself if it be so begun, continued, and carried through, as, under the blessing of God, to produce conviction in your mind, and render you in *all* respects such as I wish to see you. But, to this end, allow me to remind you, that I undertook it in consequence of an implied contract: *my* part is accomplished, faithfully, I trust, though, doubtless, very imperfectly; let me, then, beg of you to execute *your* part with all possible fidelity, and it will be easy to predict the issue of the inquiry.

25 Rom. vi. 9—13. 1 Cor. vi. 20; vii. 23; xv. 50—58. Phil. ii. passim. iii. 7—21; iv. 1—7. Col. iii. 1—17. Eph. ii. 8—22; iii. iv. 1—5. 30—32.

Meditate upon what I have written; and then institute a few comparisons. Compare, for example, the many difficulties, and absurdities, the baseless supports, and the cheerless prospects of Infidelity, with the few difficulties, the " reasonable service," the " everlasting foundations," and the glorious and delightful prospects of Christianity. Compare, again, the cold speculations, the unsatisfactory and forced criticisms, the proud spirit of rejection, the assumed superiority in point of information over those who were personally " taught of Christ," the false or ridiculous translations, and the feebleness of motives to love of Christ and devotedness to God, which are exhibited and exemplified by those who usurp to themselves the exclusive title of " *rational* Christians," with the noble glow of sentiment, the natural and obvious interpretations, the humble and teachable disposition, the grateful eagerness to receive instruction from the word of God communicated by Prophets and Apostles, the resolute determination to bend the mind to the *genuine* meaning of Scripture whatever it may be, and the ready yielding to the peculiar and powerful incentives furnished in the exquisite plan of redemption, manifested among many very professed disciples of Christ. Make these comparisons with your wonted acuteness and impartiality; and I have no fear that the result will be favourable to the cause I have here so feebly defended, and infinitely favourable to your own happiness.

If you wish, my friend, to have your capacious mind still farther ennobled and expanded by the influence of those truths which can make " the simple wise," and have been known to confer a remarkable dignity of character and enlargement of soul[96] upon the other-

[96] " Il y a dans les maximes de l'Evangile une noblesse et une élévation où les cœurs vils et rampans ne sauroient atteindre. La Religion, qui fait les grandes âmes, ne paroît faite que pour elles: et *il faut être grand ou le devenir*, pour être Chrétien."—MASSILLON.

wise ignoble and illiterate;—if you wish to have your "conversation in heaven" while your residence is on earth, to "see the invisible," and delight in that Saviour whom "to know is life eternal;"—if you wish to place your trust on solid rock, to have your hope anchored in eternity, your charity glowing toward all mankind;—if you wish to enjoy all the blessings of Providence with a zest unknown to you before, to gaze upon the delights of creation with new eyes, to explore the wonders of nature with double ardour;—if you wish to evince a meek, gentle, compliant, forgiving, benevolent, conscientious behaviour in every station and character, to be a dutiful and respectful son, a discreet and tender husband, an affectionate and pious parent, an honest and obedient subject;—if you wish to possess a heart swelling with love to God, a tongue ready to speak his praises and defend his cause, hands prepared to do his work, and feet to "walk in the way of his commandments;"—if you wish to bear prosperity without high-mindedness, adversity without a murmur, to manifest calm resignation under affliction, patient acquiescence in all the divine dispensations, to honour God through life, and to glorify him in death; to have the sting of the last great enemy deprived of its poison, and to quit the present life with a soul panting after immortality, and anxious to join the glorious assembly who "surround the throne of God and of the Lamb;"—if such as these be your desires, then, "forsake not the fountain of living waters," walk not by the light "of sparks of your own kindling," confide not in that strength which is "perfect weakness;" but throw yourself in imagination and in soul at the foot of the cross, implore with the deepest humility, yet with the unceasing ardour of Jacob, when he "wrestled with God and prevailed," a sincere and active faith in the merits and mediation of a "crucified" Redeemer, daily and rich supplies of the purifying and invigorating influences of the Spirit, and an

ability so to persevere unto the end of your course, that you may "adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things."

That these blessings may be yours: that you may here live *long* to enjoy and to impart much happiness; and at length, full of years and full of holiness, be called to partake of the "*rest which remaineth for the people of God,*" is the fervent prayer of

Your affectionate Friend.

THE END.

CHISWICK:
PRINTED BY C. WHITTINGHAM.

WORKS
PUBLISHED BY BALDWIN AND CRADOCK,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

A HISTORY of ENGLAND, from the INVASION BY THE ROMANS TO THE ACCESSION OF WILLIAM AND MARY. By JOHN LINGARD, D.D. The Fourth Edition, with great Additions, and revised throughout. In 13 Vols. foolscap, with Vignette Titles, price *3l. 5s.*

THE LIFE and WORKS of WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ., complete in Fifteen beautifully-printed Volumes, price only 5*s.* each. By ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq., LL.D. Poet Laureate.

*** This is the only complete edition of COWPER that has ever appeared, and includes the Translations of the ILIAD and ODYSSEY. There is no publication of the size which surpasses it in the beauty of its Embellishments, consisting of Illustrative Scenery and Portraits. The Designs are by HARVEY, and the Engravings by some of the most eminent Artists of the day; indeed, no expense has been spared to render it worthy of the distinction it has attained.

THE TALES and NOVELS OF MARIA EDGEWORTH. Complete in Eighteen Volumes, price 5*s.* each, handsomely bound in water-lined cloth, and lettered. The ILLUSTRATIONS drawn by W. HARVEY, and engraved in the first style of excellence by GOODALL, C. ROLLS, GOODYEAR, H. ROBINSON, FINDEN, BACON, ENGLEHEART, &c.

This elegant Edition corresponds in size and illustration with Byron, Crabbe, and Scott's Works; and must be a desirable acquisition to all Libraries. As a present for Youth it is unexceptionable; and for the Drawing-room Table no Work can be more appropriate.

The Edition contains the following works, any portion of which may be had separately, price 5*s.* each volume; namely:—

Castle Rackrent, and Irish Bulls, 1 vol. Moral Tales, 2 vols. Popular Tales, 2 vols. Tales of Fashionable Life and Modern Griselda, 5 vols. Belinda, 2 vols. Leonora, and Letters for Literary Ladies, 1 vol. Patronage, 3 vols. Harrington, 1 vol. Ormond, 1 vol.

TRAITS and STORIES of the IRISH PEASANTRY. By WILLIAM CARLETON. Illustrated with numerous characteristic Plates and Wood Engravings. Fourth Edition, in 5 Vols. foolscap 8vo., handsomely printed, price 1*l.* 5*s.* cloth extra.

*** The Work contains Twenty-one Stories; and the Volumes, each including at least Four Tales, may be purchased separately.

"Admirable, truly, intensely Irish;—never were the outrageous whimsicalities of that strange, wild, imaginative people so characteristically described; nor, amidst all the fun, frolic, and folly, is there any dearth of poetry, pathos, and passion. The author is a jewel."—*Blackwood's Magazine.*

A GRANDMOTHER'S ADVICE to YOUNG MOTHERS on the PHYSICAL EDUCATION of CHILDREN. By the Countess Dowager Mountcashell. Revised and augmented by the Author. In 12mo., price *7s.*

MORNING COMMUNINGS with GOD; or, Devotional Meditations for Every Day in the Year. Translated from the Original German of Christopher Christian Sturm, Author of "Reflections," &c. By William Johnstone, A.M. The Fourth Edition, corrected and improved. In a handsome Pocket Volume, price *8s.* in cloth.

The Same, in Two Volumes, small 8vo., large type, price *16s.* cloth.

CONTEMPLATIONS on the SUFFERINGS of JESUS CHRIST; in a Series of Devotional Exercises, with an Explanatory Paraphrase of the Gospel Narrative. By the Same. With a Memoir and a Portrait of Sturm. Small 8vo., price *9s.* cloth.

LEGENDS and STORIES of IRELAND. By Samuel Lover, Esq., R.H.A. The Fourth Edition, illustrated with Wood Engravings, from Drawings by the Author, foolscap 8vo., price *6s.* cloth extra.

LEGENDS and STORIES of IRELAND. By the Same. Second Series. A New Edition, corrected and illustrated with fine Wood Engravings, in foolscap 8vo., price *7s. 6d.* cloth extra.

TALES FROM SHAKSPEARE. By Mr. and Miss Lamb. A New and elegant Edition, with 22 fine cuts, from Designs by Harvey, printed by Whittingham. 1 vol. 12mo. *7s. 6d.*

A DESCRIPTION of more than THREE HUNDRED ANIMALS, with numerous fine Cuts, elegantly printed by Whittingham, 12mo. New and enlarged Edition, with many additional Cuts, *9s.*

MRS. LEICESTER'S SCHOOL; or, The History of several Young Ladies as related by Themselves. By Miss Lamb. Eleventh Edition, 12mo., with a fine Frontispiece and Vignette, *4s.*

THE SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON; or, Adventures of a Father and Mother and four Sons on a Desert Island. The Ninth Edition, handsomely printed by Whittingham, numerous Cuts. 12mo. *7s. 6d.*

SANDFORD and MERTON. A new and improved Edition, complete in 1 vol. fine Engravings. 12mo. *7s. 6d.*

BALDWIN AND CRADOCK.

THE LIFE and SURPRISING ADVENTURES of ROBINSON CRUSOE, of York, Mariner; with a Biographical Account of DEFOE: illustrated with Forty-six characteristic Wood Engravings, finely executed from Drawings by HARVEY. 12mo., price *6s. 6d.* in cloth.

*** The only complete edition extant.

ELLEN CAMERON. A Tale for young Ladies. Fine Plate, from a Drawing by HARVEY. 12mo. *5s.*

KEEPER'S TRAVELS. With fine Engravings, after Drawings by HARVEY. Fourteenth Edition, 12mo. *6s.*

STORIES from the HISTORY of ITALY. By ANNE MANNING. With fine Frontispiece and Vignette, by HARVEY, 12mo., *7s. 6d.*

A HISTORY of FRANCE, including the Principal Events from the Foundation of the Empire by Pharamond. For Young Persons. By Mrs. MOORE. In a handsome 12mo. vol. with Six Engravings. Third Edition, *7s. 6d.*

THE POETICAL CLASS-BOOK; or, Reading Lessons for every Day in the Year, selected from the most popular English Poets, Ancient and Modern, arranged in Daily Lessons and Weekly Portions. By WILLIAM F. MYLIUS. The Seventh Edition, enlarged by numerous Selections from Modern Authors, in 12mo., price *5s.* handsomely half-bound and lettered.

MYLIUS'S FIRST BOOK of POETRY, intended for the Younger Classes. Fine Frontispiece. 10th Edition, price *3s.* half-bound.

MYLIUS'S JUNIOR CLASS-BOOK; or, Reading Lessons for every Day in the Year, in Prose and Verse. 7th Edition, *5s.* boards.

MYLIUS'S SCHOOL DICTIONARY of the ENGLISH LANGUAGE: constructed as a Series of Daily Lessons. New Edition. 18mo., price *2s. 6d.* bound.

*** This little work, which has had unexampled success as a Word Book for Children, contains every word in general use in the language, fully explained, the obsolete words only being left out.

POEMS on VARIOUS SUBJECTS. Selected to enforce the practice of Virtue, and to comprise in one volume the Beauties of English Poetry. By E. TOMKINS. 18mo. Fine Frontispiece and Vignette, the 16th Edition, price *3s.* half-bound.

*** The present edition contains a great variety of Poems from Modern Poets, selected for their poetical beauty and pure morality.

THE SCHOOL ANTHOLOGY; or, Selections for Reading and Recitation in Prose and Verse. By JAMES HEWS BRANSBY. Second Edition, considerably augmented, with many new pieces. 12mo., price 5s. cloth.

AN INTRODUCTION to GEOGRAPHY and ASTRONOMY, with the USE of the GLOBES. By E. and J. BRUCE. Ninth Edition, with considerable Additions and Improvements by the Rev. J. C. BRUCE, A.M. Price only 6s. bound.

A HISTORICAL and BIOGRAPHICAL ATLAS; or, Charts of Sacred and Profane History and Biography, from the Creation of the World to the Birth of Christ, for the Use of Schools and Students in History. By JOHN BRUCE. In small folio, beautifully engraved, price 16s. half-bound.

A SUMMARY of ANCIENT HISTORY and BIOGRAPHY, as a Companion to the Atlas. 8vo., price 3s. 6d. cloth.

A GUIDE to the FRENCH LANGUAGE, particularly adapted for Self-instruction. By J. J. P. LE BRETHON. 8vo., New Edition, price 12s. canvass boards. A KEY to the Exercises, 8s.

THE BEGINNER'S FRENCH-BOOK: Life of Alfred the Great; from Rapin's History; with a Grammatical Vocabulary of all the Words as they occur in the Work; to which is added, a Dictionary of the Genders of the French Nouns, with a Series of Exercises thereon. By N. LAMBERT, Member of the Philological Society of Paris, &c. In 12mo., price 3s. 6d. cloth.

LA BAGATELLE; intended to introduce Children of Four or Five Years old to some Knowledge of the French Language. A New Edition, embellished with Cuts; and entirely revised by MADAME N. L. 18mo., price 3s. bound.

*** An excellent French Book for Children.

A PRACTICAL GERMAN GRAMMAR for the Use of Schools and Private Students. By JOHN ROWBOTHAM. New Edition, 12mo., price 6s. 6d. boards.

A PRACTICAL GRAMMAR of the SPANISH LANGUAGE, with Copious Exercises, the whole rendered so easy as to be intelligible without the aid of an Instructor. By S. WHITEHEAD. In 12mo., price 7s. 6d. boards.

A PRACTICAL SYSTEM of ALGEBRA; designed for the Use of Schools and Private Students. By JOHN ROWBOTHAM, and PETER NICHOLSON. Third Edition, 12mo., much improved, and Stereotyped, price 5s. bound.

*** A KEY to the above, by the help of which Algebra may be self-taught. 12mo., price 8s. bound.